

'Ocalan escapes murder attempt'

BONN (R) — A German magazine reported on Saturday the exiled leader of a Kurdish rebel group fighting for autonomy from Turkey had narrowly escaped an attempt on his life at his home in Damascus. Citing unidentified German security sources, the news weekly Focus said a bomb went off in the Damascus flat of Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the banned Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), last Tuesday. Focus said the Kurdish guerrilla leader had used the flat in the past to meet other officials of the PKK, banned as a terrorist organisation in Turkey and also outlawed in Germany. Mr. Ocalan was not there at the time of the blast, it said in an advance issue of the report which is to be published on Monday. There were no indications as to who was behind the attack. Mr. Ocalan last week renewed threats against Turkish tourist resorts, saying in a German television interview his guerrillas were already heading for them to stage attacks. The PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire in its 12-year guerrilla war with the Turkish army in December but threatened to renew hostilities if attacked.



Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordanian Press Foundation

جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية «الراي»

Plane with 112 aboard goes down in Miami

MIAMI (AP) — A plane with about 112 people on board crashed just west of the Miami International Airport on Saturday, a television station reported. The DC-9 jetliner lost contact with the Miami International Airport tower around 2 p.m. (1800 GMT) Sunday, WSVN reported. The plane, which belonged to ValuJet Airlines, was headed from Atlanta to Miami, the station said. Flight 592 went down about 13 kilometres northwest of Miami International Airport, WSVN reported. Aerial pictures showed what happened to be pieces of the jetliner spread over an inaccessible region of the Florida Everglades. The Federal Aviation Administration in Atlanta could not immediately be reached. The Miami International tower also couldn't be reached.

Holiday declared

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Al Khabarti issued a directive on Saturday declaring all ministries and departments will observe an official holiday May 15 on the occasion of the new Hijra year.

Assad meets Saudi envoy

DAMASCUS (R) — Syrian President Hafez Al Assad on Saturday met a senior Saudi Arabian military official who arrived in Syria on a previously announced visit, officials said. They said Mr. Assad met Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al Tuwaigri, deputy chief of the Saudi National Guard, at the presidential resort palace in the coastal city of Latakia, 350 kilometres north of Damascus. No details were immediately available about the talks. Saudi Arabia, which maintains close ties with both the United States and Syria, played a major role in the convening of the Syrian-Israeli peace talks which began in 1991.

Khaddam in Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Syrian Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam arrived in Tehran Saturday for talks on bilateral and regional issues with Iran, Iranian radio reported. Mr. Khaddam told reporters at the airport that he would also discuss Israel's latest "aggression against Lebanon" last month. He was to meet later Saturday with Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. The radio said a Lebanese delegation, headed by Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Michel Murr, had also arrived on Tuesday. The Syrian and Lebanese officials are to attend inauguration ceremonies Monday in northeastern Iran for a rail link completing the new "silk route" between China and Turkey.

Iran condemns U.S. decision

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran on Saturday condemned a U.S. court's decision to extradite a leader of the Palestinian group Hamas to Israel, saying it was a breach of international law which would trigger Muslim anger. "This illegal and wilful decision violates the international convention on civil and political rights," Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi charged. Washington was "duty-bound to observe these rules," a New York judge on Wednesday cleared the way for the extradition to Israel of Musa Abu Marzouk, head of the political office of Hamas. He was detained last year in New York. Mr. Mohammadi, quoted by Tehran Radio, warned that the decision would "intensify Muslim wrath towards both the United States and Israel."

Settler's rock hurts Palestinian woman

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — A Jewish settler dropped a stone from the second floor of a house in Hebron onto a Palestinian woman walking below on Saturday, witnesses and Israeli army radio said. Zahia Abu Smeih, 40, who was walking with her children in the Beit Hadassa settlement in the West Bank town, was taken to hospital and given two stitches in her head. About 400 Jews live among more than 120,000 Palestinians in Hebron.

Damascus Declaration to meet in July

MANAMA (AFP) — The foreign ministers of Egypt, Syria and the six Gulf Arab states are to gather in the Omani capital Muscat in July for a meeting of their Damascus Declaration pact, the Gulf News Agency said Saturday. The Bahrain-based news agency did not give an exact date for the meeting. The last took place in Syria in December.

King highly satisfied with U.S.-Jordanian air training exercises

Exercises have nothing to do with Iraq, HM says during visit to Azraq air base

AZRAQ (Agencies) — His Majesty King Hussein made a field tour Saturday of the Azraq air force base on the final day of U.S.-Jordanian war games in the desert and expressed high satisfaction over the exercises. King Hussein inspected U.S. F-15 and F-16 fighters which took part in exercises dubbed "Eager Tiger" at Azraq. They were part of sorties of a seven-day joint aerial drill, and the 34 U.S. combat jets will now restrict their mission to surveillance of a "no-fly zone" over southern Iraq. "I am very satisfied with this exercise which have enabled our pilots to get first hand know-how about sophisticated technology," King Hussein told reporters. "It was a wonderful opportunity to have people working together."

The King stressed that the deployment of U.S. warplanes in Jordan was not directed against Iraq. "The exercise had nothing to do with Iraq," he said. Jordan has allowed U.S. jets to fly surveillance operations over Iraq for the first time from its territory, and reporters were invited to a guided visit of this air force base.

"The U.S. is a friendly nation with which we conducted several military training exercises in the past and this is one of the largest and one about which the Americans themselves have expressed satisfaction," said the King during his visit to the Muwaffaq Salti air base here. "Our men are a real source of pride to Jordan and the exercise was a chance for them to improve their capabilities, and the results were all good," added the King. In reply to a question the King said: "We have been conducting training with friendly nations for years. As to this exercise we have completed more than half of it and it will end according to schedule."

Thirty-four American planes and 1,100 U.S. service personnel are taking part in the exercise. "The joint exercise was for U.S. an opportunity to share professional knowledge in various jobs," said U.S. general Bill Looney, commander of the "Airpower Expeditionary Force" in Jordan. "The Jordanians are eager to learn about F-16s next year," he said. Thirty-four U.S. jet fighters were deployed in Jordan on April 13 for surveillance of a "no-fly zone" over southern Iraq. After he was briefed on the joint exercise, the King slid into the cockpit of F-15 and F-16 fighters. King Hussein, an accomplished pilot, was briefed by U.S. pilots on the traits of the two combat planes. Fourteen U.S. and Jordanian fighters lined up successively on the tarmac, awaiting take-off under the watchful eye of King Hussein. Within seconds, grey F-16 and F-15 combat planes trailed by a Jordanian formation of green F-15s and French-built Mirage 15, zoomed low over the Azraq air force base in the middle of the desert.

Gen. Looney said U.S. squadrons make roughly 10 sorties per day over southern Iraq. "We launch a mission just about every day and it usually involves 10-plus aircraft," he told reporters. The missions will last until late June.

The King meanwhile replied to a question concerning the status of Jerusalem and the holy places by saying that Jordan's stand vis-a-vis the city was explained to a press conference he held jointly with President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt in Cairo last week. He said that Jordan does not support the idea of placing the Holy City under the



His Majesty King Hussein, a veteran pilot, on Saturday sits in the cockpit of an American jetfighter taking part in training exercises in Jordan (photo by Yousef Allan)

Tripartite summit in Cairo today could be significant turning point

From Sa'eda Kilani in Cairo

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein arrives here today heading a high-level delegation to an Egyptian-Palestinian-Jordanian summit meeting that is seen by officials here as a significant step towards better relations among the three parties. The summit, a culmination of extensive diplomatic efforts in the past few days, is expected to tackle regional cooperation, the Palestinian-Israeli final status negotiations and preparations for the Middle East and North Africa economic summit which will be held here in November. King Hussein, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak

and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat will today hold a closed-door meeting, which will be followed by an expanded session grouping senior officials from the three sides. Discussions will mainly concentrate on ways and the appropriate mechanism to implement decisions taken by the three leaders. "We hope the (Jordanian-Egyptian) relationship will be improved and will continue to see improvement," an official here said. "We are not in competition (over any role) and we are willing to take part in joint efforts in the (Arab-Israeli) peace process."

Jordanian-Egyptian relations — which could be described as having been stagnant until a summit between King Hussein and President Mubarak last week following the successful meeting of a joint committee chaired by the prime ministers of the two countries have steadily grown warm recently, especially after the Israel blitz against Lebanon last month. The warmth in relations is expected to add "harmony" to the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship that has become more tense in the past few weeks. "There were certain parties that provided wrong

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Jordanians are largely satisfied with democratic reforms, but want more

Opinion poll shows disenchantment with political parties, support for amendments to election law

By Amy Henderson
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordanians are satisfied with democratic reforms in the country, but feel that progress towards a greater level of democracy may have receded over the past year, the results of a poll revealed Saturday. The poll also demonstrated that popularity of political Islam and of political parties in Jordan is on the decline. The survey, conducted by the Centre for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, is intended to assess and monitor trends in

Jordanians' attitudes towards democracy, parliamentary life and political parties, the centre said. It is the third of its kind to be conducted by the centre since democratic initiatives were introduced to the country in 1989. Twelve hundred Jordanians polled rated Jordan's progress towards democracy on a scale of one to 10, ten being the most democratic that the country could be. The average rating was 4.55, a slight decrease from 4.83 in 1995 and 4.6 in 1993. The poll also showed that of six civil liberties

associated with democracy (freedoms of expression, press, demonstration, vigil and political party participation), people felt free to exercise these liberties to varying degrees. For example, 17.2 and 24.8 per cent said they felt there was a "great degree" of freedom in exercising the right to free expression and press respectively, but 20.5 per cent and 13.3 per cent said that these rights do not exist. Roughly 45 per cent of those surveyed said that the freedom to demonstrate did not exist. Twenty-one per cent said that the freedom to

belong to a political party did not exist, and 39 per cent said that the right to hold vigil also did not exist. Those polled demonstrated a sense of disenchantment with political parties, and their responses to the survey showed that the utilisation of and participation in political parties as a means of political expression was falling. "After looking at the trends indicated from these three surveys (1993, 1995 and 1996), we see that political participation isn't as substantial as we would

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Peres urges Syria and Lebanon to talk peace

MIDDLESBURG. The Netherlands (Agencies) — Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres on Saturday called on Syria and Lebanon to join peace talks with Israel. Addressing a human rights honour award ceremony in the Netherlands via a satellite link from Israel, Mr. Peres said the Middle East was in a phase of rapid transition. "After so many years of strife and enmity I would say to our neighbours who have yet to come to the table of peace, namely Syria and Lebanon: I dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbour. Come, let us talk."

Mr. Peres last week pulled out of personally attending the "Four Freedoms" award ceremony because of fresh turmoil in the Middle East following clashes between Israel and Hizbollah guerrillas in South Lebanon. The "Four Freedoms" — freedom of worship, freedom from want, freedom of expression and freedom from fear — were set out in a speech to Congress by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1941. Medals representing the freedoms are awarded by the Netherlands-based Roosevelt Foundation in Middelburg, capital of the Dutch province of Zeeland. The Roosevelt family had links with the province. Accepting the freedom from fear award, Mr. Peres said peace was within reach

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Lebanon ceasefire meeting adjourns without accord

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — Five-country talks failed on Friday to settle arrangements to monitor a ceasefire in Lebanon and the U.S. State Department said they would resume next Tuesday. After a three-hour meeting, department spokesman Nicholas Burns said in a brief statement that "the delegations made a very good start on working out the procedures for effective functioning of the monitoring group."

U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross hosted the meeting of the Washington ambassadors of Israel, Lebanon, Syria and France at the State Department. The monitoring group would aim to prevent a repeat of last month's heavy fighting between Israel and Iranian-backed Hizbollah guerrillas in South Lebanon. The group was called for in the April 27 truce negotiated by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, whose shuttle diplomacy ended a 17-day Israeli blitz in South Lebanon. The U.S. statement quoted Mr. Ross as reporting that Friday's meeting "was conducted in a constructive atmosphere."

"All the parties emphasised their desire to put together an effective monitoring group and all came prepared to discuss issues in a very practical way," the statement said. "There were certain parties that provided wrong

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with his U.N. counterpart Hans Corell in New York on Friday had been "useful."

Before that, he had a 90-minute meeting with Dr. Ghali. Mr. Corell also told journalists that "we are making progress," despite the "many difficulties."

Dr. Ghali was quoted by his spokeswoman, Sylvana Foa, as saying he felt "less pessimistic" on Friday about the chances of reaching an accord. Both officials refused to give details on the negotiations, which are aimed at concluding a memorandum of understanding allowing Iraq to export limited quantities of oil to buy food and

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Iraq envoy sees slight progress in oil talks

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Iraqi negotiator Abdul Amir Al Anbari on Saturday saw a slight improvement in his oil talks at the United Nations, after an intervention by U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali. "We have made a lot of progress in negotiations on the sale of oil, but not on the question of distribution" of food and medical supplies to the Iraqi people, said Mr. Anbari.

"Things are going relatively better," he told the official Iraqi News Agency (INA). The negotiations were being held in a "working atmosphere."

Mr. Anbari, who had earlier said that the negotiations were going "from worse to worse," said a two-hour ses-

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No end in sight for Kurdish revolt in Turkey as toll climbs

ANKARA (AP) — The scenario is repeated almost every spring. Turkish troops pour into the mountains to attack Kurdish guerrilla bases, causing heavy losses on both sides. Then the soldiers withdraw and the rebels regroup to resume their struggle for autonomy.

So it was April 7 when 10,000 soldiers backed by aircraft swept into the rugged terrain of southeastern Turkey to attack bases of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

So far, the Turkish army says, 48 soldiers and 414 Kurdish guerrillas have been killed in the latest offensive, with most of the rebel deaths coming in air raids. Rebel camps in northern Iraq, a staging point for hit-and-run attacks into Turkey, have also been targeted.

Last spring, the army sent 35,000 soldiers into northern Iraq in an effort to eradicate the Kurdish guerrillas.

But the PKK, which has been battling for autonomy within Turkey since 1984, fights on.

Turkish politicians like Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz want to resolve the conflict by granting some cultural rights to the ethnic Kurds. But when previous governments promised similar concessions, Turkey's powerful and nationalistic military blocked the proposals.

Meanwhile, alleged atrocities by Turkish troops — generally denied by the government — have brought condemnations from European nations with which Turkey is trying to improve economic ties.

Many Turks, including families who have lost loved ones in the fighting, want to end the war.

Holding a large framed

photograph in her hands, Gulbanim Akbulut talks to the young soldier in the picture: "You come to my dreams, my son. Did you ask for water? Did you feel cold? Did you die quickly?"

Mrs. Akbulut's son Omer died a year ago at age 26 during a clash with Kurdish guerrillas near the Iranian border. He is one of more than 3,000 soldiers killed in the 12-year war, along with 12,000 rebels and 5,000 civilians.

"It hurts so bad, and the pain grows when I learn about the death of more youngsters everyday," said Mrs. Akbulut, a 59-year-old widow who lives a poor neighbourhood on the outskirts of Ankara. "Something has to be done to end this war."

Roughly one out of five of Turkey's 62 million population is a Kurd. Turks and Kurds are both Muslim, and they are culturally integrated in the western parts of the country where intermarriage is common.

But the state's suppression of Kurdish ethnic rights, including a ban on their language, has led to the PKK's armed campaign.

The PKK rebels attack villages suspected of collaborating with the army, target border outposts and mine roads. Dozens of teachers at state schools have been attacked by the PKK.

PKK rebels in Turkey are estimated at around 2,600-2,900, while another 4,000 are believed to be outside the country, mostly in neighbouring Iraq.

The Turkish-Kurdish war has ravaged the economy of the remote area near Iraq. Thousands of people have been left homeless, forced out of their villages either by

the army or the PKK. Some 2,000 schools remain closed. Politicians and the army are at loggerheads over how to deal with the PKK.

While Mr. Yilmaz, the new prime minister, is willing to negotiate, other politicians and the army oppose a settlement.

Ex-Premier Bulent Ecevit, leader of the Democratic Left Party, opposes granting cultural rights, including giving children Kurdish names. Mr. Ecevit contends the whole problem is economic.

"Kurdish people do not think about such issues, but they are created by people in Istanbul or Brussels," he said, referring to criticism of Turkey's policies by European politicians and Turkish intellectuals.

Other Turkish politicians hope the conflict can be resolved over time.

"We have to be patient. The military will eventually share our position. What we seek is a civilian, democratic solution and it will happen gradually," Korkut Ozal, a leading deputy from Mr. Yilmaz's Motherland Party, told the Associated Press.

The growing civilian and military casualties have sharpened feelings among many Kurds against granting concessions to the Kurds. But not all Turks favour the use of force.

There is no organised anti-war movement, but lately people have started to speak up individually.

"Let everybody enjoy equal rights," said Osman Karabulut, an Ankara resident whose 20-year-old son died in a fighting with the PKK two years ago. "Poverty and oppression: that's what created the PKK."



COOL TREAT: A hippopotamus at Jerusalem's Biblical Zoo opens its mouth wide enough to swallow the keeper as it enjoys a treat of fresh, cool water on a hot summer's day on Saturday. Israel began its summer with two weeks of unseasonal heat waves (Reuters photo)

Chirac to pardon Moroccan gardener serving life-term in controversial murder case

PARIS (R) — French President Jacques Chirac has decided to commute the sentence of a Moroccan gardener jailed for the murder of a Riviera heiress in what was widely regarded as a miscarriage of justice, his office said on Friday.

Presidential spokeswoman Catherine Colonna said Mr. Chirac would sign a partial pardon in the next few days under which Omar Raddad, jailed for 18 years by an assize court jury for the 1991 murder of Ghislaine Marziani, could be freed in two years' time.

He will have served seven years in jail for a crime he has always denied.

Ms. Colonna said Mr. Chirac had disclosed his decision to Morocco's King Hassan during the monarch's state visit last week, asking reciprocal clemency for several people held in Moroccan jails.

Confirming a report in the newspaper Le Monde, Ms. Colonna told Reuters: "The president has indeed decided on a partial pardon and he informed the king of Morocco during his visit here."

"The president raised a number of individual cases with the king and we have high hopes of positive results," she said.

Respecting diplomatic niceties, Ms. Colonna declined to say whether the Moroccan cases involved political prisoners.

King Hassan had long voiced concern at the circumstances of Mr. Raddad's conviction, which sparked outrage in Morocco and among civil rights campaigners in France.

The mild-mannered gardener has staged several hunger-strikes to protest his innocence.

French officials stressed the presidential pardon did not address the issue of whether Mr. Raddad was guilty or innocent. As far as

the justice system is concerned, he remains guilty.

Speaking for his defence team, lawyer Gerard Baudoux welcomed Mr. Chirac's decision but said he hoped his client's innocence would finally be recognised.

"His earlier-than-planned release will please all those who have been troubled by this case. But only recognition of his full innocence will be entirely satisfactory," Mr. Baudoux told Reuters.

Mr. Raddad was convicted of murdering his 65-year-old employer largely on the basis of a message scrawled in blood on the floor of the cellar where her body was found, saying: "Omar m'a tué" (Omar killed me).

The defence, accusing investigators of ignoring other leads out of racist motives, argued that an educated woman like Marziani would not have made the grammatical error of using the infinitive "tuer" instead of the past participle "tué."

Under France's justice system, there is no right of appeal against assize court jury verdicts. The supreme court refused Mr. Raddad's bid for a retrial on procedural grounds last year.

King Hassan and other members of the royal family have paid lawyers and private detectives to seek to overturn the ruling, diplomatic sources said.

Outspoken defence lawyer Jacques Vergès compared Mr. Raddad's conviction to the 19th century Dreyfus Case, a notorious French miscarriage of justice in which a Jewish army officer was framed on spying charges and sentenced to solitary confinement at the notorious Devil's Island penal colony.

The Raddad case was a major factor in Justice Minister Jacques Toubon's decision to institute an appeal procedure from assize courts. He plans legislation later this year.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kuwaiti paper rejects Iraq's call

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — A Kuwaiti newspaper on Saturday rejected an Iraqi call for reconciliation with the neighbour it occupied in August 1990 and said the gesture was "in bad taste." "A regime which massacres and represses its own people, which attacks its neighbours, kills and imprisons innocent people, should be ignored," said the daily Al Watan. "Kuwaitis totally reject this (reconciliation) call which comes from criminals who have no conscience," it charged. Any such call from Baghdad was "in bad taste." The Iraqi newspaper Babel on Thursday "advised" Kuwait to accept an offer of reconciliation for its own good. "There is no shame in extending a hand to Iraq and turning over the page of the past," according to Babel, which is run by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's oldest son Uday. "It isn't in the interest of a country the size of Kuwait to follow a policy which amounts to starving a lion. It's a strategic error," Babel said in an editorial entitled "Some advice to our southern neighbour." Oil will "dry up one day and forcing navies will not stay," it said, alluding to defence pacts Kuwait has signed with Washington and other allies.

Egyptian troops, armaments head for Bosnia

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian soldiers have begun leaving for Bosnia to take part in the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) overseeing the establishment of the Dayton peace accord in the war-ravaged country, officials said Saturday. The army battalion is made up of 625 officers and soldiers, including an armoured battalion, two pieces of artillery, a logistics unit as well as administrative and medical units, the Foreign Ministry said. The battalion is equipped with Egyptian-made Fahd 30 tanks, armoured vehicles equipped with missiles and cannons, troop transports, bulldozers, ambulances, and water and supply trucks. The commander of the battalion, Colonel Hamdi Ahmad, told the newspaper Al-Ahram on Saturday that his men had received "special training for street fighting and battles in the forest." Egypt had a 440-member contingent as part of the previous U.N. peacekeeping force in Bosnia, mainly in Sarajevo.

Greek protests block U.S. passenger ship

ATHENS (AFP) — Protesting Greek seamen barred a cruise ship carrying 800 American passengers from a Greek port Saturday, forcing authorities to reroute the vessel to another undisclosed port, shipping officials said. The Greek sailors blocked the ship at Piraeus saying it was violating a national shipping monopoly, the Greek Ministry for Merchant Shipping said. The ship, which had arrived off the Greek coast from Istanbul, was due to unload passengers and pick up others. After talks with Greek authorities, the Anglo-American company Oriane, which owns the cruise ship Marco Polo, rerouted the vessel in another Greek port, a ministry spokesman said. He did not say to which port. The spokesman said the ship's passengers would then disembark but said the ship would not take others on board. Seamen began their protest at dawn to stop passengers boarding the Marco Polo. They say the ship was violating laws which reserve coastal trade for Greek vessels. Greek Merchant Shipping Minister Cosmas Sfyriou said the laws were not being broken where passengers had boarded in another country, but said the ship did not have the right to pick up passengers in Greece.

Cyprus to pursue casino legalisation

LIMASSOL (R) — Cyprus is to prepare legislation for the creation of casinos, seen by many hoteliers on the holiday island as a means of attracting well-heeled tourists.

"A final decision for casinos, whether it will be one or two, has yet to be taken," Interior Minister Dinos Michaelides told a hotel and casino gaming conference organised by consultants Arthur Andersen in the port town of Limassol on Friday.

"The matter will be pursued after (May 26) parliamentary elections," he said. "We already know that there are some voices against casinos."

"At present, the only form of gambling legal in Cyprus is betting on horse races, state lottery or football pools."

Even playing games like poker in the privacy of your own home is banned.

Calls for the creation of casinos in Cyprus, which relies heavily on tourism, are gaining momentum as the island struggles to retain its position as a quality destination while confronted with a drop in profitability of hotels and faltering occupancy rates.

Arrivals this year are expected to reach 2.2 million, compared to the 2.3 million who visited the island in 1995.

Hoteliers see casinos as the ticket to maintaining a steady flow of quality tourism. "Hotels are seeking new opportunities to enhance their operating income," says Christis Christoforou, partner in Arthur Andersen's Cyprus representatives Chrysanthou and Christoforou.

The casino debate has been raging for years. In 1994 the government decided that up to two casinos could be created, but issues like supervision, taxation, membership system for Cypriots and most importantly, who is going to get the lucrative contract have not been addressed.

The issue is now in the hands of the island's attorney general, who is to prepare a draft bill and refer it back to the island's cabinet which will then refer it to the house of representatives for approval.

If its advocates are lucky they might get a casino before 2000.

"The debate has been going on for a few decades and it has always reached a dead end," said hoteliers association general manager Zacharias Ioannides.

According to the interior minister, 86 companies have expressed an interest in creating casinos. But only one or two, will get the licence.

The hoteliers association wants one in every resort.

"That is in order to have equal treatment, and means not just the tourist resorts but Nicosia, being the capital, and mountain resorts," said Mr. Ioannides.

The bill to turn Cyprus into a gambling centre is expected to come under fire from at least one major political party on the island.

"We are unreservedly against it," said Andros Kyprianou, a spokesman of the communist Akel party, Cyprus's second largest.

Kabul forces claim taking control of Taliban districts

KABUL (AFP) — Afghan government troops have captured Taliban districts deep inside the mountainous territory near Kabul, including a key strategic point, defence officials claimed Saturday.

Government forces seized the Chak and Daimirdad districts of Central Wardak province on Friday after pounding the Taliban with heavy weapons and aerial bombing raids, they said.

Chak district is important because it lies next to the Taliban's main supply road linking the area, one of the springboards the militiamen used to launch their siege of Kabul last year, to their southern base at Kandahar, observers said.

No independent confirmation of the capture of the two districts — separated by 35 kilometres, could be immediately obtained here, although government jets were seen streaking across Kabul's southern flank for most of Friday.

The repeated air, rocket and artillery barrages killed at least seven warriors and resulted in the capture of vast quantities of weapons, ammunition and vehicles, a senior commander, told AFP.

"The attack was very successful as we seized two important areas as well as a huge stock of heavy and light weapons, ammunition and jeeps from the Taliban," he said.

He said the Taliban launched a desperate counter-

attack in Chak late Friday, but said they were repelled by the government firepower.

Troops and supplies were ferried into isolated Chak and Daimirdad — which are about 50 and 70 kilometres from Kabul respectively — by helicopter, officials said.

Both areas have been under Taliban control for almost 18 months, long before the gunnery moved to the outskirts of Kabul last September in a bid to seize the city.

News of the latest provincial skirmishes between the two sides came after a month of fighting between Taliban and the government in the western province of Ghor, where the Kabul forces seized but later lost two areas of the strategically crucial province.

Ghor borders on Herat province, which the Taliban seized from the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani last September, and which Kabul is desperate to retrieve.

Kabul says it still holds an important valley inside Herat province, although it concedes that the two districts of Ghor it won last month have been recaptured.

The Taliban rose up from the Koranic schools of southern Pakistan in late 1994 and have swept up control over about half of Afghanistan. They have vowed they will topple the Kabul government and install Islamic law across the country.

Jews assail Greek envoy to UNESCO

PARIS (R) — The Simon Wiesenthal Centre, a group dedicated to hunting Nazi war criminals, has appointed a noted Greek author as ambassador to UNESCO, saying he was an anti-Semite.

"Vassilis Vassilikos, writing in the Athens newspaper Ta Nea, alleged Israeli involvement in the 1967 Greek military coup," said Shimon Samuels, the centre's Paris-based international liaison director.

"Disturbed by a cooperation agreement between Turkey and Israel, he added that he could not stop wondering about 'those who crucified one of their own people.'"

Mr. Samuels said he wrote to Federico Mayor, director-general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, saying that "such outrageous statements contradict the conditions of his appointment and the declared positions of UNESCO against anti-Semitism and prejudice."

Mr. Vassilikos later told Reuters in a telephone call from Athens he was outraged at the accusations "since no one who knows my career and writings can suggest I am an anti-Semite. On the contrary, Greek extreme rightists accuse me of being pro-Zionist."

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Amman 28, Aqaba 36, Humidity readings: Amman 36 per cent, Aqaba 23 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Ghazi Zawaidh 736011
Dr. Hisham Sammour 765018
Dr. Hisham Kan'an 790286
Dr. Khalidoun Asfour 666973
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778236
Al Asana pharmacy 670785
Nairokh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmoussani pharmacy 637660
Nairokh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'anneh 250808
Aljoudh pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Khalil Abu Hussein 985019
Khalil pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 611111

Civil Defence Immediate
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality 787111
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Radio Jordan 773111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power
Company 634381
RJ Flight Information 08-53320
Queen Alia Int'l. Airport 08-53320

HOSPITALS
AMMAN:
Husseini Medical Centre 81381332
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 64428116
Akilch Maternity, J. Amn 64424112

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Mathias, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmoussani 607071
Shmoussani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Musabbir Hospital 6672279
The Islamic, Abdali 66412757
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Italian, Al-Muhajireen 77101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 77511/26
Army, Marks 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 60234050
Amal Hospital 607135
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 01983323
Zarqa National Hospital 01983323
The Sina Hospital 01986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital 01986732
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital 01273355
Greek Catholic Hospital 01272225
Ibn Al-Nafies Hospital 012747100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 013314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia Int'l. Airport

International Airport Tel. (08)533200-5, where it should ways be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

09:35 Jeddah (RJ)
09:55 Larnaca (RJ)
10:20 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
10:35 Hayat, Abu Dhabi (add) (RJ)
10:55 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:05 Bahrain (RJ)
11:15 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
17:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
17:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:40 Paris (RJ)
18:30 London (RJ)
19:00 Brussels, Geneva (RJ)
20:50 Tunis (RJ)
21:15 Vienna (RJ)
21:30 Rome (RJ)
22:10 Frankfurt (RJ)
23:20 Munich, Athens (RJ)
03:59 Madrid, Casablanca (RJ)
04:20 Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

11:30 Sana'a (Y)
12:30 Shanghai, Bahrain (GF)
15:00 Doha (QF)
15:30 Moscow (SU)
21:10 Beirut (ME)
21:20 Cairo (MS)
06:10 Istanbul (TK)
01:00 London, Beirut (BA)

02:25 Amsterdam (KL)
Royal Wings (RW) Flights (Marka Airport)

09:25 Aqaba (RW)
10:40 Aqaba (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

04:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
07:15 Beirut (RJ)
08:00 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
09:00 Madrid (add) (RJ)
12:15 Athens, Rome (RJ)
12:15 Tunis (RJ)
12:30 Frankfurt (RJ)
12:30 Munich (RJ)
12:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
12:35 Manchester (add) (RJ)
20:00 Jeddah (RJ)
21:35 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
21:40 New Delhi (RJ)
21:45 Damascus (RJ)
22:45 Singapore, Jakarta (RJ)
22:45 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
23:40 Bangkok (RJ)
23:45 Sana'a (RJ)
00:55 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
00:45 Cairo (RJ)

Other flights (Terminal 2)

06:45 Beirut (ME)
12:30 Sana'a (Y)
14:30 Doha (QF)
16:00 Doha (QF)

MARKET PRICES

Apples per price in lbs per kg.

Apple 700/500
Banana 600/600
Banana (Mukammal) 520/520
Banana (imported) 860/600
Cabbage 100/60
Carrot 280/180
Cauliflower 150/100
Cucumbers (large) 120/70
Cucumbers (small) 180/100
Eggplant 150/100
Fava beans 210/130
Garlic 350/350
Garlic (green) 250/170
Lemon 580/380
Marrow (large) 180/120
Marrow (small) 270/180
Mushrooms 250/140
Onion (dry) 170/100
Orange 400/300
Peas 260/150
Pepper (hot) 280/180
Pepper (sweet) 260/160
Potato 160/100

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
15:00 Cartoon — The Flintstones
15:30 Bush School
15:45 Mac and Muttley
16:10 Italian Soccer
17:02 La Vie Devant Moi
17:30 Les Plus Petits Que Soi
18:00 Magazine — Envoy Special
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Magazine — Sports of Musique
19:35 Cinema, Cinema
20:00 American Chart Show
20:45 The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
21:10 Black's Magic
22:00 News in English
22:25 The Bold and the Beautiful
23:15 Countdown

PRAYER TIMES
04:08 Fair
05:36 (Sunrise) Doha
12:32 Dhahran
16:12 'Asr
19:28 Maghreb
21:55 'Isha

CHURCHES
St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swideth, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632783
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasanta Church Tel. 623666
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.
Anglican Church Tel. 632826
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Armenian International Church Tel. 652526.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457.
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295.
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

WEATHER
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Khamasli weather conditions will prevail, so it will be hot, dry and dusty with winds southeasterly moderate and active. In Aqaba, winds will be southerly active and seas rough.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 18 / 33
Aqaba 24 / 38
Djordan 15 / 37
Jordan Valley 22 / 37

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Rival Indian political parties lobby president for power

NEW DELHI (R) — Rival parties on the right and left staked competing claims to power Saturday after voters dealt a crushing defeat to the Congress Party and gave India a hung parliament.

Leaders of both the right-wing Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the left-wing National Front-Left Front (NF-LF) lobbied President Shankar Dayal Sharma for an invitation to form a new government.

Both told him they could form a majority coalition.

A statement from the presidential palace said only that "the president has indicated that he has taken note of their assertions."

A steady stream of political bosses walked into the imposing red sandstone presidential palace, where the annually ceremonial head of state took centre stage.

Deliberate and retiring, Mr. Sharma has not signalled his preference or how or when he would choose India's next leader, who will have to prove a majority in parliament.

The constitution leaves the choice up to the head of state. It gives him no rules to follow, but convention suggests he ask the leader of the biggest party to form a government.

The BJP said it could prove a majority as soon as the president demitted. A Communist leader said Mr. Sharma had given the NF-LF two days to show it could form a government.

P.V. Narasimha Rao stepped down Friday as prime minister after it became clear his Congress Party, which has ruled the world's second

most populous country for all but four years since independence in 1947, had been routed in the polls.

Congress was forecast to finish third behind the BJP and the NF-LF, its worst showing ever. Mr. Rao stays on as caretaker until a new government is formed.

The BJP said its newly elected parliamentary leader, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, should be appointed prime minister as the party had emerged from the election as the largest group in the Lok Sabha, the 545-member lower house of parliament.

The BJP accused of anti-Muslim bias by opponents, was forecast to take 175 to 185 seats.

"The constitution and political propriety and practice demand that Mr. Vajpayee be invited to form the new government," BJP President Lal Krishna Advani told reporters.

The BJP has said that in government it would build the atom bomb and curb foreign investment in consumer industries opened up as Mr. Rao reformed the economy in the last five years.

While the BJP leaders were still pressing their claim with Mr. Sharma, veteran Communist leader Jyoti Basu arrived at the ornate palace to present the NF-LF's case.

The left-wing coalition trailed the BJP, and was expected to take 140 to 150 seats, far short of a majority. But it said it would attract enough support from regional parties and independents to push it over the 273-vote threshold.

The NF-LF's main magnet is the staunch opposition of many mainstream parties to the BJP's programme

of promoting the Hindu way of life.

"We are confident of forming our government," Communist Party of India (Marxist) official Harkishan Singh Surjeet told Reuters. "There is absolutely no doubt in our minds."

Congress has said it would consider backing the NF-LF, if the alliance pursued Mr. Rao's free-trade economic policies.

Like the BJP, the NF-LF favours tighter restrictions on foreign investment.

Mr. Basu, an 81-year-old Communist from Calcutta, was thrust to the top of the NF-LF's list of prime ministerial candidates. Mr. Basu has said he would prefer to remain in West Bengal, which he has led as chief minister since 1977.

But his status as elder statesman with a corruption scandal to his name catapulted him to the top of the NF-LF, which is never short of aspiring leaders.

Meanwhile Pakistan is concerned with the growth of Hindu fundamentalism across the border in India, with newspapers and officials here Saturday terming the Indian election outcome a blow to secularism as a state policy in India.

The platform of Hindu radicals and their pre-election "threats" against Pakistan are "disturbing things," said a Pakistani official, who declined to be identified.

In an editorial, The News daily said Saturday, "with the Hindu extremist organisation, the Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party-BJP) putting up its best show ever, secularism as a state policy is on its way out."

"The BJP is unabashedly Communist as it contested on a platform that reflected trenchant Hindu chauvinism," the English-language daily said.

Pakistanis are watching with keen interest the current lobbying for power by different groups in India after the resignation of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in the wake of an unprecedented electoral defeat of his Congress (I) Party.

"Politics in India will never be the same," The News said in its editorial.

The Frontier Post said the Congress met its downfall because it "failed to garner the crucial Muslim votes" as it did not fulfil its promise to rebuild the ancient mosque in Ayodhya, destroyed by Hindu fanatics in 1992.

Another English-language daily, The Nation, foresaw a weak government and instability in India.

"Whoever ultimately emerges as the winner in the uphill task of negotiating for a coalition will not be ensured of a safe passage through the full term, as the scores of partners in the alliance will be vulnerable to falling apart when it comes to sharing the spoils of power," it said.



Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party's candidate for prime minister, gestures while talking to reporters at the Indian Presidential Palace after meeting President Shankar Dayal Sharma in New Delhi. The BJP, which emerged the biggest party in the general elections though without gaining a majority in parliament, is expected to stake its claim with Mr. Sharma to form the next government (Reuters photo)

Okinawa again rejects plea for U.S. bases

TOKYO (R) — Japan's southern province of Okinawa again rejected Saturday a central government plea to allow part of the island to be used for U.S. bases, prolonging a row that erupted after U.S. servicemen raped a schoolgirl. The Okinawa Prefectural Land Expropriation Committee, an institution independent of the local government and made up of seven Okinawan lawyers and scholars, said the government had failed to justify its need for the piece of land.

"The central government has not provided adequate proof that the land was essential for maintaining Japan's security," committee Chairman Kenji Kenjo said in a statement Saturday.

Saturday's decision — the first of a series concerning landowners whose contracts expired last month — was a further blow for Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto who now faces the possibility of a long and complicated court process.

Many of a second, larger hatch of 3,000 landowners whose contracts are due to expire next year have already vowed not to allow their land to be used by the U.S. Military.

"I regret this very much," Mr. Hashimoto told reporters after the decision. "This comes at a time when we were making our best efforts to reduce the burden on the Okinawa people."

Saturday's decision was over a tiny speck of land owned by an anti-bases campaigner inside the U.S. Navy's Sobe communications facility, popularly called the "Elephant Cage" for its huge circular structure.

The lease expired last month, but Tokyo has allowed the U.S. Armed Forces to continue using the land without a clear legal basis.

When the contract expired the Tokyo government filed a request with the committee to allow the emergency expropriation of the land, to be in force for six months.

It was that request the committee turned down.

The Tokyo government cannot appeal Saturday's decision and must now wait several months for another decision from the same committee on its normal expropriation request, which once given would be good for 10 years.

The affair stems from Okinawa Governor Masahide Ota's refusal to sign new land-lease contracts for U.S. bases, a move triggered by public anger against U.S. bases on Okinawa following the rape case last September.

All three U.S. servicemen were convicted and received prison terms for raping the 12-year old schoolgirl.

A Japanese provincial governor holds the right to lease land to the central government on behalf of individual owners.

Last month, in a bid to improve strained ties between the two allies, President Bill Clinton and Mr. Hashimoto agreed on the removal of several U.S. military facilities on Okinawa, which hosts 75 per cent of all such facilities in Japan.

Man-induced snow kills 4,900 cattle in Mongolia

ULAN BATOR (R) — Snowfalls, artificially-induced to put out huge fires still raging across the steppes of Mongolia, have killed thousands of cattle, Civil Defence officials said Saturday.

At least 4,900 cattle froze to death or drowned in Oovorkhangai province, on the southern slopes of the Khangai Mountains, where snow 80 cm deep has thawed in places and flooded large areas of pasture, the officials told Reuters.

"The snow in the area is so thick that nobody can get closer than 14 kilometres to the provincial capital," a Civil Defence spokeswoman in the Ulan Bator said.

"We don't know yet what the whole damage is," she said. At least 4,200 cattle have frozen in the snow and drowned in the floods in Oovorkhangai province's Zuunhayan county alone, officials said.

About 700 cattle have died in Arvaikheer, the provincial capital, according to wireless contacts between Civil Defence officials and people in the town.

The Civil Defence official said that because the floods and snow had severed telephone lines in the area, where two shepherd boys and their flock of 150 sheep were found frozen to death earlier this week, damage reports remained incomplete.

Snow fell across large parts of Mongolia after the government and army, trying to put out fires that threatened Ulan Bator, seeded the clouds with explosives to squeeze out the humidity and prompt precipitation.

Elsewhere in Mongolia, fires that started four weeks ago were still blazing. Officials said 76 fires were under control and that at least a dozen blazes were not.

In Bulgan, Selenge, Hentii and central provinces, some fires that firefighters had extinguished reignited and some that were burning between fire breaks suddenly flared out of control, officials said.

In nine northern Mongolian provinces alone, 1,684 families of nomads had already been evacuated with more than 436,000 cattle, Civil Defence officials said.

Another 1,600 families and more than 588,000 cattle were also expected to be relocated, the officials said.

The fires in 288 places in the huge, sparsely-populated nation have killed 17 people and injured 62, and destroyed more than 80,000 square kilometres of forests and pastureland.

Diplomats said the fires had caused huge damage to Mongolia's fragile economy, already shaken by the collapse of its former sponsor the Soviet Union, and foreign aid pledged so far was not enough to repair the destruction.

Damage has been estimated at around \$1.8 billion. Ulan Bator has appealed for international help for the victims and equipment to fight the blazes, but aid has proved slow in arriving.

The severity of the fires, which have been declared a national catastrophe, has been blamed on an almost snowless winter that has left forests and pastureland tinder-dry.



Indian Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao (centre) introduces his cabinet colleagues to President S. D. Sharma after submitting his resignation in New Delhi. Party sources said they believed Mr. Rao would be able to retain leadership of the Congress Parliamentary Party (Reuters photo)

China and U.S. defuse nuclear row but relations remain tense

BEIJING (R) — China and the United States defused a row over Beijing's alleged sales of nuclear weapons-related technology Saturday, but ties between the two remained tense as a trade war loomed over Chinese copyright piracy.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman formally announced that China strictly observed the nuclear weapons non-proliferation treaty as part of a deal to avert U.S. sanctions over alleged Chinese sales of nuclear arms-related technology to Pakistan.

"China pursues the policy of not endorsing, encouraging or engaging in the proliferation of nuclear weapons, or assisting other countries in developing such weapons," the official Xinhua News Agency quoted the spokesman as saying.

The nuclear cooperation between China and the countries concerned is exclusively for peaceful purposes. China will not provide assistance to unsafeguarded nuclear facilities," the spokesman said.

The announcement followed Washington's decision Friday not to impose sanctions on Beijing for the alleged sale to Pakistan of \$70,000 worth of ring magnets that can be used to enrich uranium.

The United States rescinded its threat to impose targeted sanctions on China under the 1994 U.S. Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act after winning assurances from Beijing that it would not make such sales in the

future and made a public statement saying so.

The long-awaited resolution of this row opened the way for the U.S. Export-Import Bank to begin approving loans and loan guarantees for more than \$11 billion in American business projects in China.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher outraged Beijing last month when he asked the bank to delay final approval on all China-related projects until he decided whether to impose sanctions on China over the nuclear technology issue.

However, although the resolution of this row has eased some of the friction between the two giants, they remain locked in a dispute over alleged Chinese copyright piracy that threatens to turn nasty next week.

On Friday, Beijing said it had drafted its own list of U.S. imports that could be targeted if Washington next Wednesday goes ahead with its promise to unveil a list of Chinese goods that could be hit with sanctions.

Washington has said it would publish a preliminary list of \$3 billion worth of such imports unless China improves its enforcement of a 1995 agreement to halt piracy of U.S. music, films and computer software.

A U.S. trade official was due to arrive in Beijing this weekend to try to settle the row, although U.S. President Bill Clinton has said he does not expect a full-blown trade war.

U.S. more optimistic on Korea MIA's

WASHINGTON (R) — Prompted by an apparent breakthrough agreement with North Korea, the Pentagon has said that remains of perhaps half of the 8,100 U.S. servicemen missing from the Korean War could eventually be found and returned.

"Our guess would be that somewhere probably around three to four thousand would be an accurate representation of what we could do," Alan Liotta told reporters.

"That number, of course, may change once we get onto the ground in North Korea and we are able to draw an assessment from the actual scene."

Mr. Liotta, deputy director of the Defence Department's Office on Prisoner of War (PoW) and Missing in Action (MIA) Affairs, spoke after U.S. and North Korean negotiators Thursday agreed that Washington would pay cash-strapped Pyongyang \$2 million for turning over 162 sets of remains in 1993 and 1994. Only five of those had been positively identified as Americans missing since the 1950-53 Korean War.

But more importantly, the breakthrough after five days of talks in New York also stipulated that more talks will be held next month to determine when and where unprecedented joint searches for remains of missing Americans could be held in North Korea this year.

"We see this as a very positive step forward on this humanitarian issue," Mr. Liotta said in response to questions. "It's something that we've been working on with the North Koreans through the United Nations Command and then directly with them since January in an effort to try and resolve the issue."

U.S. officials said privately the talks appeared to signal another step forward in recently improved relations between Washington and Pyongyang. The North Korean economy is in shambles and poor crops are threatening the North with famine.

"This (\$2 million payment to the North) had been an issue of discussion for quite some time and it had been a stumbling block in us being able to have broader discussions with the North Koreans on recovery efforts within the country," Mr. Liotta told reporters.

He stressed that the payment did not set a precedent for future payments, which will be judged on what the United States decides is fair to repay the North for its efforts. He also said no sites or dates had been determined for joint searches in the North although sites of former prison camps might be fruitful because of possible mass graves.

"We do not have particular sites in mind at this time," he said. "We have begun in my office to prepare some sites that we'd like to propose. And the June meeting will be used for both sides to discuss the sites and hopefully to determine what sites we go to first."

Mr. Liotta said the U.S. Part of any search team would probably be small, between six and 10 military and civilian experts.

Diana said threatening to sell gems

LONDON (R) — Princess Diana is threatening to sell her royal jewels as her planned divorce from Prince Charles becomes increasingly acrimonious, British newspapers reported Saturday.

The latest twist in the troubled parting followed earlier reports that Princess Diana had met Queen Elizabeth and told her she would pull out of divorce talks unless there were some signs of progress.

The Daily Express said Princess Diana's threat to sell her royal jewels could put her in open conflict with the queen, who firmly believed they were heirlooms and must remain in the royal family.

"The Princess of Wales argues that the gems, a wedding present, belong to her," said the newspaper.

The Express said some of the gems, including a tiara worth an estimated \$2 million (\$3 million), had already been sent to leading London jeweller Marwan Chatila for valuation.

It quoted Mr. Chatila as saying Princess Diana's sapphire and diamond engagement ring was the "most significant" item in her collection. The ring was bought for £28,500

(\$43,560) and would now be worth around £50,000 (\$76,420) at face value.

"However, because it belongs to Princess Diana, I believe private collectors would willingly pay £1 million (\$1.53 million) for it," said Mr. Chatila.

Princess Diana's threat to sell her royal jewels was unlikely to help her divorce negotiations with Prince Charles, who was already reported to be annoyed that her meeting with his mother had hit the headlines.

The Daily Telegraph said Prince Charles was considering legal action to prevent further disclosures about the state of the royal divorce.

"There is mounting speculation on the prince's side that such leaks are emanating from those close to the princess," said the newspaper.

Lawyers for the feuding couple have been locked in bitter negotiations since Princess Diana, at the urging of the queen, agreed earlier this year to go ahead with a divorce.

If the couple fail to reach an agreement, Prince Charles could obtain a so-called "no-consent" divorce at the end of next year.

Bob Geldof, Paula Yates divorce

LONDON (AFP) — Irish pop singer Bob Geldof and TV presenter Paula Yates have divorced, ending 10 years of what the British press played up as the ideal rock-and-roll marriage. A London court granted a quickie divorce Friday.

Geldof, 41, who used to sing with the Boomtown Rats and soared to international fame in the late 1980s when he organised the "Band Aid" concert for Ethiopian famine victims, and Yates, 35, have three daughters, Fifi Trickett, 12, Peaches, six, and Pixie, four. They separated last year. Yates left Geldof for Michael Hutchence, leader of the Australian rock band Inxs, and the two are expecting a baby girl, already named Heavenly Herani, this summer. Geldof lives with Jeanne Marie, a 26-year-old French actress.

Yates, 35, have three daughters, Fifi Trickett, 12, Peaches, six, and Pixie, four. They separated last year. Yates left Geldof for Michael Hutchence, leader of the Australian rock band Inxs, and the two are expecting a baby girl, already named Heavenly Herani, this summer. Geldof lives with Jeanne Marie, a 26-year-old French actress.

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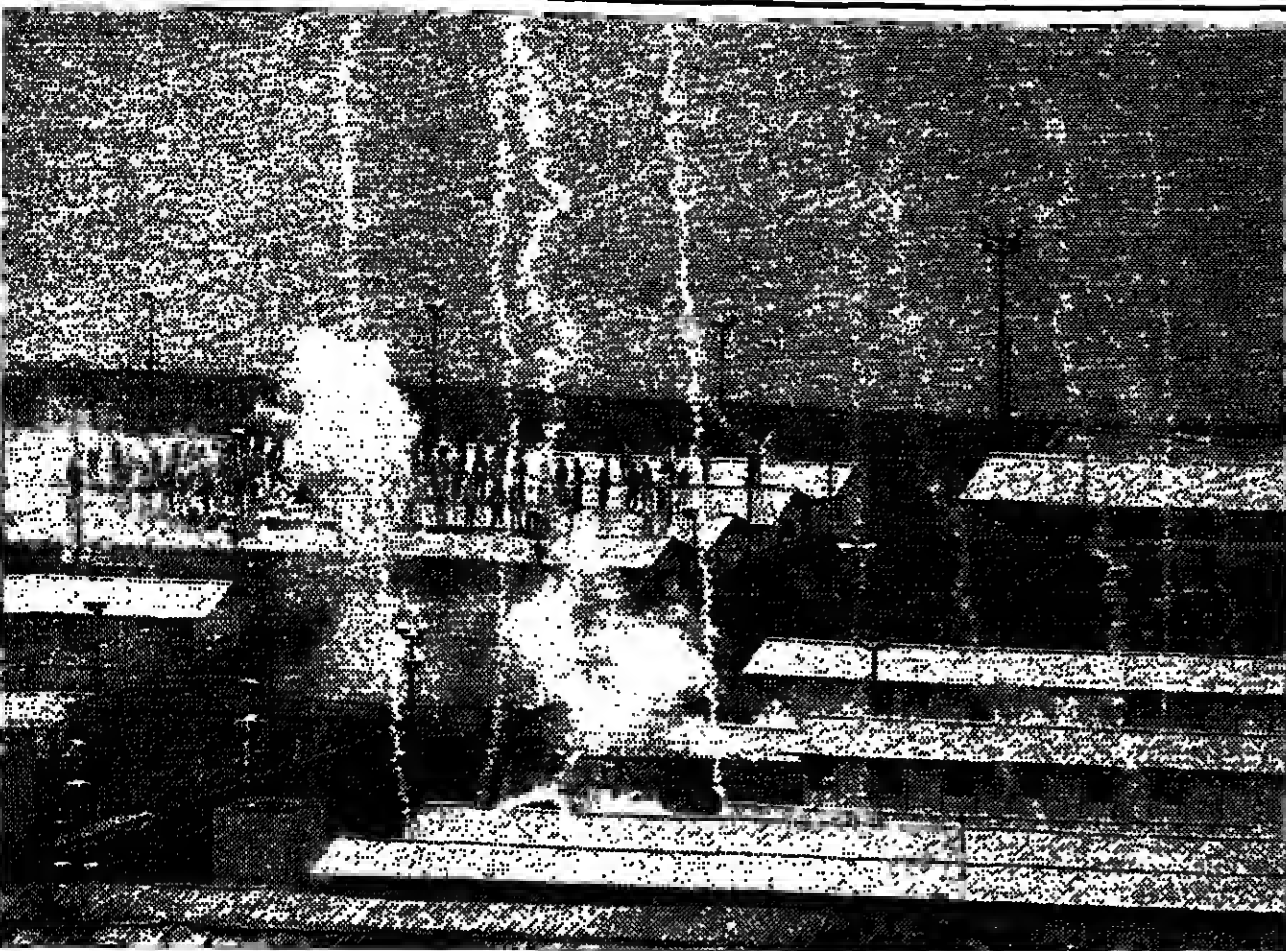
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Police's teargas canisters fall in the Whitehead detention camp Saturday in order to disperse rioting Vietnamese who staged rooftop protests for the second day and violently resisted efforts to remove them. The uprising of the Vietnamese boatpeople Friday was one of the worst riots in Hong Kong in years with 200 detainees escaping after toppling fences and storming gates (Reuters photo)

Boatpeople continue riots in Hong Kong

HONG KONG (R) — Rioting Vietnamese buried rocks and spears and police fired teargas in a Hong Kong prison camp Saturday as boatpeople staged rooftop protests for the second day and violently resisted efforts to deport them.

The rioters waved banners, shouted freedom slogans and bombarded the police from hut roofs after authorities tried to round up inmates for the latest wave of forced repatriation. Security forces said five officers were injured in the clash.

Friday's uprising and mass breakout at the Whitehead Camp in the rural New Territories was one of the worst riots in Hong Kong penal institutions in years. Rioters razed 26 buildings, set ablaze 53 vehicles and burned camp records of inmates.

Prisons Commissioner Raymond Lai said 119 inmates escaped after toppling fences and storming the gates Friday and that about 80 had been recaptured, leaving about 35 on the run.

Mr. Lai told reporters a reliable count was made Saturday and earlier estimates that 200 had escaped were exaggerated.

Most of the camp's 8,600 detainees have failed to secure refugee status and are deemed illegal immigrants. China insists all 18,000 boatpeople detained in Hong Kong be removed by

the time the British colony reverts to Chinese sovereignty in mid-1997.

"Vietnamese migrants showed complete disregard not only for law and order but also for life and property. Seventeen staff narrowly escaped death from a building set on fire," Mr. Lai said.

"This incident will not shake the government's resolve. These people will be going back to Vietnam. The sooner the better."

Saturday's clashes ignited as police and guards moved 350 migrants from the centre. The government is emptying Whitehead as it steps up a programme of forced returns to Vietnam. Clouds of smoke mingled with acrid teargas over the huts of the camp, located beside the sea, after Saturday's battle.

Babies stared vacantly and children waved sadly through the steel mesh of cage-like trucks as whole families of failed asylum-seekers were trucked out of the camp to the more secure High Island Detention Centre, a first step to deportation.

But hundreds more at Whitehead waved banners and shouted from the rooftops in a tense stand-off with riot police. Small children crawled dangerously over the roof ridges.

About 200 rooftop rioters waved banners and chanted slogans. One banner said: "Fight to the end for free-

dom and democracy." Although riot police had gained access to the roofs, a spokesman said the situation was not yet under control.

He said it was possible the guards might have removed some people who were not yet due for repatriation but identification was made difficult because of the lost records.

About 2,000 security men surrounded the huts and counsellors tried to talk the protesters into climbing down. Police scoured hills and nearby towns for fugitives.

The riots did not dent the government's determination to proceed with deportation plans. Any shreds of sympathy Hong Kong people harboured for the boatpeople fizzled as they counted the cost of what officials called deplorable wanton violence.

Newspapers and callers to radio talks shows spoke of the public's desire for the government to charter ships to deport boat people in large numbers as a result of the mayhem.

"Time to get tough," was the headline of an editorial in the English-language south China Morning Post.

The boatpeople are would-be refugees who fled Vietnam after the Communist victory in 1975. Some 30,000 remain in camps in South East Asia, with the largest number in Hong Kong.

Clinton, Dole use opposite campaign strategies

STATE COLLEGE, Pennsylvania (AFP) — While President Bill Clinton is making maximum use of the dignified platform the White House gives him, Senate leader Bob Dole has opted to run his campaign from within Congress, a strategy that has raised some eyebrows.

Judging from the lead opinion polls give him, Mr. Clinton made the right choice.

The Democratic president and the Republican senator are virtually certain to face off in the November elections.

Mr. Clinton's appearance here Friday was an example of his strategy to steer clear as long as possible from partisan politics and retain a statesmanlike aura.

He drew loud applause during his speech at a graduation ceremony at Pennsylvania State University that like many of his recent addresses focused on traditional values.

Praising the notion of "personal responsibility," Mr. Clinton urged his fellow Americans, and young citizens in particular, to adopt a spirit of community service to help find a solution to the social ills of America.

He drew thunderous applause when he urged the several hundred graduates facing him "to give back some of the things your country has given to you" — a wink to former President

John F. Kennedy's famous call: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

While Mr. Clinton wooed them with uncontroversial themes that burn no one, Sen. Dole spends his days deep in legislative battles.

After winning the Republican primaries that determine the party's presidential candidate, Sen. Dole decided to retain his post as Senate leader, while at the same time campaigning for the top job.

"It's a very strange strategy indeed," said Stephen Hess of the Brookings Institution in Washington. "He is bogged down in the minutiae of the issues ... on a variety of issues that he cannot choose," Mr. Hess told AFP.

"It would be great if he were running for leadership of the Senate," Mr. Hess said, adding however that as things stand, "it's a disastrous decision."

Every night, TV screens show a Bob Dole bogged down in highly technical procedural battles few people can understand and using the legislative jargon he has spoken for 35 years.

On the other hand, when Mr. Clinton appears on television, it is usually in a solemn and dignified setting, during ceremonies for the victims of the April 19, 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, or at the launch of a campaign to cut teenage pregnancy, and particularly during foreign visits. Foreign policy is

usually an important asset for a presidential campaigning for re-election.

There is often little substance in the carefully orchestrated presidential ceremonies, but in the American political debate, where television reigns supreme, appearance is everything.

Mr. Clinton has a tremendous advantage in this regard, being the White House tenant.

"The White House is like having a megaphone for everything you say. It magnifies your good points and your bad points," said Mr. Hess.

After two years during which his administration was seen as leaning to the left — in the U.S. context — Mr. Clinton has moved his politics and his message closer to the centre since the Republicans took control of Congress in November 1994. He even borrowed more than one leaf from the Republican book, notably the page on moral values.

Mr. Clinton's message is all the more popular since numerous Republicans appear to have done their best to appear as dangerous extremists.

All recent opinion polls agree that Mr. Clinton currently is well ahead, with the latest poll of voting intentions giving him a 31 per cent lead on Sen. Dole. But much could still happen in the six months to the elections.

Yeltsin seeks to lead democratic alliance for general elections

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin is seeking an alliance with other reformist candidates five weeks away from presidential elections which Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov is widely forecast to win.

Having presented the June 16 elections as a straight contest between himself and Mr. Zyuganov, Mr. Yeltsin is now pressing his rivals in the democratic camp to throw in their lot with his campaign, arguing that he is the only real bulwark against a return to communism.

None of the candidates are expected to get the 50 per cent plus one vote required to win the first round, and opinion surveys suggest Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Zyuganov will face each other in a second round runoff on July 7.

On a campaign visit to Astrakhan on the lower Volga Saturday, Mr. Yeltsin said he was uniting with Grigory Yavlinsky, his main challenger among the reformist candidates.

Mr. Yeltsin, 65, said he did not regard the other reformist candidates as his political opponents, stressing that "we are all in favour of democracy, a market economy and Russian greatness."

Mr. Yeltsin held talks in the Kremlin last Sunday with Mr. Yavlinsky and earlier met General Alexander Lebed.

He said he would also hold talks with Svyatoslav Fyodorov, the third reformist candidate in what the Russian media have dubbed the "third force" in the elections.

"I hope this troika will join the presidential team — there is enough work for everybody in rebuilding Russia," Mr. Yeltsin said, hinting at a possible future distribution of posts to reformist candidates if they joined his campaign.

Mr. Yavlinsky, who is not forecast to get more than 10 per cent of the votes, insisted after his talks with Mr. Yeltsin that he would not withdraw his candidacy to improve Mr. Yeltsin's chances and there was no discussion of forming a

coalition.

Despite rumours that the "third force" will announce a single candidate before the elections, negotiations between them remain at an impasse.

Mr. Yeltsin's emphasis on rallying all democratic forces behind his candidacy is aimed at preventing a repetition of the Communist victory in the December parliamentary elections, when the democratic vote was split several ways. But his strategy may also be to prevent the "third force" posing a real challenge to him in the first round.

The combined votes for the "third force" candidates would probably be greater than the 20 to 25 per cent Mr. Yeltsin is expected to get in the first round, and would be "the main threat to Yeltsin," according to Sergei Markov, a political analyst at the Carnegie Endowment For Peace.

Warning of the danger of civil war, Mr. Yeltsin's security chief Alexander Korzhakov provoked a sensation last Sunday by suggesting the elections should be postponed in the interests of stability.

However, Mr. Yeltsin quashed speculation the next day, insisting the polls would go ahead as planned.

He told Interfax News Agency Saturday he would not hold a televised debate with any of the other candidates, rejecting a call from Mr. Zyuganov Friday for such a debate.

"I was a Communist for 30 years and had so much of that demagoguery that today, with my democratic views, I cannot bear that demagoguery any more. Therefore I don't need any debates with Zyuganov," Mr. Yeltsin said.

Mr. Yeltsin, campaigning vigorously despite being hospitalised twice last year for heart trouble, has gone by plane, helicopter or ship to meet the people, and marked World War II Victory Day Thursday in both Moscow and Volgograd.

Uncertain calm prevails in Monrovia

MONROVIA (Agencies)

Battle-weary Monrovia awoke to a precarious calm Saturday after a night free of the sound of shells and gunfire, but the early morning lull was not being taken as an indication of a prolonged cessation of hostilities.

Factional clashes that began more than a month ago often do not get underway until mid-morning and the heavy rains that began overnight may also have dissuaded fighters from engaging in combat.

Meanwhile, Victor Gbeho, special envoy of Ghanaian President Jerry Rawlings, who also holds the revolving ECOWAS presidency, was expected in Monrovia Saturday, to talk with the warring parties and the Council of State about the recent Accra summit recommendations for Liberia.

With a ceasefire called Monday by factional leader and Council of State member Charles Taylor having had little effect, and a peace package set out by regional foreign ministers in Accra earlier this week yet to be accepted by all parties to the fighting, it remains unclear how long Monrovia will have to endure the worst clashes they have seen for four years.

On Friday, Mr. Taylor, who leads the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), whose fighters he regards as "government troops," said opposed militiamen should disarm to the African peacekeeping force, ECOMOG, if the conflict is to be resolved.

Since early April, Mr. Taylor's men and those of fellow council member Alhaji Kromah have battled ethnic Krahn fighters of various factions based mainly inside the Barclay Training Centre (BTC), a downtown barracks that also houses thousands of civilians caught up in the fighting.

The NPFL Friday again launched mortar guns and rocket propelled grenades into the BTC, an everyday tactic used to flush out the armed Krahn's inside.

Mr. Taylor also said ECOMOG would have to occupy the BTC and disarm the Krahn before "government troops" withdrew from the city centre.

But the peacekeepers have kept to the sidelines during most of the month's clashes, fearful of accusations of taking sides.

Krahn leaders insist that disarmament of all fighters should be simultaneous, and are unlikely to give up their guns before their factional foes do so.

Chechen rebels free education minister, four Russian troops

MOSCOW (AFP) — Chechen separatist rebels have released the education minister of the pro-Moscow Chechen government and four Russian soldiers, Russian news agencies reported Saturday.

Chechen Interior Ministry officials quoted by ITAR-TASS said Education Minister Yefim Gelman, who had been held by the rebels for more than six months, was "in very poor health as a result of the stress he experienced."

Mr. Gelman, now at home, did not say where he had been held or on what conditions he was freed, but relatives told ITAR-TASS that the rebels had earlier demanded a \$200,000 ransom and a special account had been opened at a branch of the Kredobank.

The fate of Chechen Information Minister Lecha Magomadov and two priests kidnapped in the north Caucasus republic last year was still unknown, ITAR-TASS said.

Meanwhile, Russian Defence Ministry officials quoted by Interfax said four Russian soldiers captured in December 1995 were exchanged Friday for separatist fighters.

Chechen rebels have been battling Russian troops since Moscow poured forces into Chechnya in December 1994 in a bid to crush the independence movement formerly led by Dzhokhar Dudayev, who was killed in a Russian attack last month.

Meanwhile Russian President Boris Yeltsin confirmed Saturday he would visit Chechnya later this month, saying his intervention was needed for the warring sides to hold peace talks, Russian news agencies reported.

Speaking to local people in a park in Astrakhan in southern Russia, Mr. Yeltsin said: "I will visit Chechnya in May to get the warring sides to sit down at the negotiating table, because nobody will do that without me."

However, Mr. Yeltsin added that "of course, the (Presidential) Security Service is against my visit to Chechnya," Interfax News Agency reported.

Russian Interior Minister Anatoly Kulikov said Wednesday the security forces would not be able to guarantee Mr. Yeltsin's safety on his planned trip to the north Caucasus republic, but the Kremlin said Mr. Yeltsin himself would take the final decision on whether to go or not.

"Such a visit is impossible at the moment, but security forces will do everything possible so that it can be possible later on," Mr. Yeltsin said.

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Chechen separatist leader Zelimkhan Yandarbyev has warned that he cannot guarantee Mr. Yeltsin's security if the Russian leader visits Chechnya.

In Znamensk, a town in the Astrakhan region on the lower Volga, Mr. Yeltsin proposed the signing of a three-party peace accord between the federal authorities, the pro-Moscow Chechen government of Doku Zavgayev and the Chechen separatists.

He said he hoped such an accord could be signed before the June 16 Russian presidential elections.

Asked by a veteran in Astrakhan whether he could confirm the death of separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev, Mr. Yeltsin replied: "We know where he was buried, we know what rituals were involved, and most important, we know where his grave lies."

The Chechen separatists, who have been battling Russian forces since December 1994, said Dudayev was killed on April 21 in the southern village of Gekhi Chu in a targeted Russian missile attack.

The Russian military denied the Chechen version, saying Dudayev was killed in an inter-Chechen gunbattle.

Dudayev's successor Mr. Yandarbyev has ruled out peace talks with the Zavgayev government, insisting on direct talks with top Russian leaders.

Interfax meanwhile reported that four Chechen Interior Ministry troops were killed overnight in Gudermes, Chechnya's second town, about 35 kilometres east of the devastated capital Grozny.

Yuri Plugin, first deputy interior minister in Mr. Zavgayev's government, said a ministerial commission was investigating the deaths.

The Russian military command admitted that its helicopter gunships attacked Urus Martan, 25 kilometres south of Grozny, in a raid Friday which killed one person and wounded seven others.

The command, quoted by Interfax, said it was a "precision attack" on a rebel position. Yusup Elmurzayev, head of the Urus Martan administration, said a man was killed in the raid and four children and a woman were among the wounded.

It was the second helicopter attack in four days against the town, which has never been a rebel stronghold and until this week had managed to avoid the heavy fighting which has engulfed other regions of Chechnya.

Armani sentenced in Italian trial

MILAN (R) — A court gave fashion designer Giorgio Armani a nine-month suspended sentence in a plea bargain Friday as the bribery trial of Italy's top fashion names reopened after months of delays.

The court, presided over by Judge Salvatore Capelleri, also agreed that Mr. Armani should pay 100 million lire (\$64,000) as part of the plea bargain, a formula that implies admission of wrongdoing in exchange for leniency and a quick ruling.

Mr. Armani said in a statement issued after the judge's ruling that he did not consider himself guilty.

"I decided to plea bargain, even though I don't believe I am guilty of this charge, in order to close a chapter that has upset my professional serenity," he said.

"I gave up the opportunity to explain before the judge the reasons which, I am confident, could have cleared me."

Court sources said Mr. Armani, accused of paying 100 million lire to Milan tax inspectors in exchange for lenient audits on his fashion house, had repaid the money. He has said in the past that the money was extorted from him.

Eight other defendants, including Aldo Pinto whose wife Mariuccia Mandelli is better known as the designer Krizia, were granted their requests for plea bargains.

The 10 remaining defendants, including top designers Gianfranco Ferré, Krizia and

Gianni Versace's brother Santo declined to bargain. Their lawyers told reporters that they wanted to be able to clear their names.

A total of 19 designers, industry associates and tax inspectors are on trial. Nine of the fashion gurus were in the Milan courthouse Friday.

The trial was later adjourned to June 18 when the presiding judge will rule on two defence requests.

The first, by Ferré's lawyer Carlo Adornato, was for the panel of judges to be changed on the grounds that the Armani sentencing for corruption had prejudiced the chances of the others receiving a fair trial.

The second, by Krizia's lawyer Oreste Dominioni, was for the trial to be halted for procedural reasons.

Mr. Armani's lawyer Lionel Ceresi said earlier his client sought the plea bargain as a "mechanism for simplification."

"We would not want any negative publicity to absorb Mr. Armani's positive publicity and that's why we opted for a plea bargain," said Mr. Ceresi, who added that publicity played an essential role in the fashion sector.

"Mr. Armani's work is creative and he can't be distracted by the trial process which is made worse by the press."

Guevara 'joked' about Cuba elections — diplomat

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (R) — Cuban guerrilla leader Ernesto "Che" Guevara was joking when, in secret talks with a U.S. envoy in 1961, he promised free elections in exchange for peace with Washington, an Argentine diplomat said Friday.

Recent U.S. press reports say Argentine-born Guevara, who was killed in Bolivia in 1967, told an envoy of President John Kennedy in Uruguay that Cuba was prepared to agree not to forge an alliance with the Soviet Union and not to attack the Guantanamo Bay U.S. military base on the island.

But former Argentine diplomat Horacio Rodriguez Larreta, who organised the 1961 meeting during a party in Montevideo, told Argentina's Clarin newspaper in an interview published Friday that Guevara's proposals "were not very serious."

"Guevara was speaking humorously about them going to elections, but only once the revolution had been consolidated. He said it would take time and be one party," said the former adviser to then Argentine Foreign Minister Adolfo Mujica.

Press reports quoted newly released official U.S. papers as saying Guevara was ready to compensate U.S. firms for

confiscations in the 1959 revolution and promise Cuba would not try to export its revolution to the rest of Latin America.

Guevara, Fidel Castro's revolutionary deputy, was industry minister in 1961 when he apparently tried to broker a deal to head off a U.S. trade embargo. Just a few months earlier, Mr. Castro's army and militia had defeated an invasion attempt by U.S.-backed Cuban exiles at the Bay of Pigs.

Kennedy rejected Guevara's peace overtures and imposed an economic embargo in 1962, while Cuba strengthened its links with Communist Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union became the island's main ally and trade partner.

Mr. Rodriguez Larreta said he was not convinced that Guevara had Mr. Castro's full support for a compromise deal with Kennedy.

"On more than one occasion he said he spoke in the name of the Cuban government but that's dubious because he repeated that inside the government there were people who favoured the strategy of Moscow-dependency. He said that as if it was completely different to what he thought," he said.

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Challenge before summit

THE REFERENCE to the Middle East peace process understandably occupied the top slot on the list of key elements contained in the communiqué which was issued at the conclusion of the meetings of the Joint Jordanian-Egyptian Higher Committee in Amman last week. The strong backing that the two countries expressed for negotiations on the Palestinian-Israeli track as well as for the Israeli and Syrian-Lebanese fronts, coupled with the message that today's three-way summit in Cairo conveys, should leave no room for doubt about where this core group of Arabs stands. Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinians view this as a most critical juncture in the peace process with Israel, and unless every effort is made now to ensure real progress the region will continue to suffer from instability and disarray for a long time to come.

The Cairo summit will most probably tackle other issues notably Lebanon in the aftermath of last month's mini-war there. With added evidence from international and even Israeli sources that Israeli forces held Lebanese life with utter contempt, there is now a brewing crisis over the Cana tragedy that goes to the heart of the peace process.

Likewise the Iraqi file will be opened and the continuing suffering of its people will be discussed. With Iraq's territorial integrity being increasingly threatened and there being no total end in sight to the U.N. imposed sanctions, there is no escape from the conclusion that the terrible situation calls for a more coherent joint Arab stand that could greatly contribute to alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people. The summit could easily become the focal point for this long-awaited joint stand. After all what is at stake is not the ruling regime in Baghdad but rather the future of Iraq which is a pivotal country in the region and a backbone of Arab strength.

On the economic level, the Cairo meeting will have to address dimensions of the tripartite relationship. Of special concern in this regard will be the agreement that was struck by Jordan and Egypt last week to create a free trade zone. The step is particularly important because the Egyptian market is indeed large and can offer marketing options to Jordanian — and later Palestinian — exporters squeezed hard by the deteriorating situation in Iraq.

Hopefully the creation of the zone would not only help to redress the existing imbalance but also create new vistas for cooperation and coordination among Egypt, Palestine and Jordan. The attainment of this objective would of course need a political will. But such will can and must be given expression in today's summit.

As the twentieth century draws to a close, we have every right to expect the forging of new Arab relations starting with our three countries.

The summit is thus called upon to give an added depth and meaning to what is already there so that Arab vision for the future could be that much less blurred.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

NO MATTER how hard Shimon Peres tries to conceal the real aims of the new U.S.-Israeli military accord, the world public opinion firmly believes that it is primarily aimed at ensuring the success of the Israeli Labour Party in the May 29 general elections, said a writer for Al Ra'i Saturday. Mohammad Barhoumeh said that with this deal, Peres hopes to win the support of the Israeli electorate and President Clinton hopes to get the backing of the Jewish voters in this year's presidential elections. It is true that the U.S. is biased towards Israel, providing it with all that it needs of weapons, financial and economic aid, according to the writer. But, he said, the new deal moves the U.S.-Israeli cooperation in military affairs one step forward, enabling Israel to have access to the American military arsenal and receive all kinds of sophisticated weapons. He said Peres seems to have achieved for Israel what all the previous governments of the Jewish state failed to achieve in the military field and secured the scrapping of the clause that called for the destruction of Israel in the Palestinian charter as well.

THE ARABS had hoped that the latest Israeli aggression on Lebanon would reactivate the peace process and involve Syria, Lebanon and Israel in negotiations aimed at a permanent settlement that would secure the end of occupation, said Al Ra'i daily Saturday. But the results of the investigations conducted by the United Nations, which found that Israel is not evicted for raiding a U.N. compound and killing 100 Lebanese civilians, have angered Israel and the United States to a degree that these two allies feel they should not respect the U.N. report in this case and should not take speedy measures to resume the peace negotiations, said the daily. The Israeli premier has said that his country cannot trust the U.N. organisation and demanded that the status of the U.N. forces, which have been stationed in Lebanon since 1978, be reexamined, according to the paper which said that this Israeli reaction proves to the world that the Jewish state does not respect the international legitimacy and the U.N. resolutions which demand that Israeli forces withdraw from the occupied Arab lands.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

The day after the IMF programme

KNOWING THE short-term political motivations of our decision makers, at the level of the executive and legislative branches of government, we can safely assume that, had it not been for the policies and conditions set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which the government has no alternative but to abide by, the economic conditions in Jordan would, by now, be similar to those in Sudan, at best, and similar to those in Somalia, at worst. Jordan entered this year a new phase of economic adjustment effort through a new three-year programme approved by the IMF, covering 1996 through 1998. The main objectives of this new programme is to carry on with reforms, achieve higher growth in the gross domestic product (GDP), build up a more sizeable reserve of foreign exchange with the Central Bank, and continue to reduce the deficits in the fiscal budget as well as in the current account of the balance of payments, year after year, until we reach a state of equilibrium at some point in time.

During these three years, the foreign debt instalments, falling due, will continue to be smoothly rescheduled and the interest due will be capitalised with no problem, as has always been the case since 1989. Therefore, Jordan will not face major economic or social difficulties, except for what we have become used to, which is unavoidable in the process of reducing deficits, and the related unpopular decisions which any government would like to avoid or at least defer, such as the reduction or elimination of subsidies and raising prices of certain goods and services produced by the public sector to recover the economic cost of production.

But what about the direction which we may take immediately after the end of the three years period? Would Jordan find itself obliged to go on adopting yet more adjustment programmes and cooperating with the IMF indefinitely, or would Jordan graduate at that point in time, feeling that it can manage on its own without having to depend on the IMF and its certificate of good behaviour, especially in dealing with the creditors in London Club and Paris Club?

Jordanian policy makers will find themselves at a crossroad. The current IMF programme expires in December 1998. Entering a new programme will not mean the possibility of more rescheduling, because all instalments falling due on 1998 and thereafter will not be eligible for rescheduling, either because they were already rescheduled during the past nine years but fell due again, or they relate to new loans which were withdrawn after the cut-off date of Jan. 1, 1989. In both cases the instalments could not be rescheduled.

Therefore, Jordan is not under obligation to submit to any further programme for the sake of managing its external debts. It no more needs the IMF certificate of good behaviour. Simply there will be no more decisions to be taken by the London Club or the Paris Club relating to Jordanian debt, except for the follow up of repayment on timely basis as agreed in the rescheduling agreements made between 1989 and 1998.

However, we venture to suggest that it will be in Jordan's best interest to continue to adhere voluntarily to an IMF approved programme, first in order to facilitate the receipt of international financial aid which we will continue to need and second to avoid another set-back similar to that of 1988/1989. Policies of appeasement and submission to popular slogans may lead us again to reproduce economic distortions and imbalances, in which case economic crisis may follow.

The fact that Jordan will be adopting the programme on a voluntary basis is an assurance that it does not infringe on its sovereignty, while, at the same time, it inspires investor confidence.

Bosnia — peace or truce?

By Gwynne Dyer

AT THE time, it was not clear whether last autumn's Dayton accord meant peace in Bosnia, or just a truce. Five months later — and only seven months before NATO troops are scheduled to pull out again — it is clear that the choice is between an unjust peace and a renewed war.

Saying that the country ought to be politically unified before NATO pulls out is too hard a test, said U.S. Defence Secretary Bill Perry last month, although that is exactly what the Dayton deal demands. Weeks were spent negotiating a timetable for a federal Bosnia, but all that has mysteriously ceased to matter.

Bosnian unification is "certainly not going to happen by the time NATO is ready to pull out of there," said Mr. Perry. So does NATO postpone its planned pull-out on December 20? Not according to Mr. Perry: "I can only think of one reason for NATO to stay longer, and that is to prevent a war from starting up again — not to reunify the country."

NATO's behaviour on the ground is even more eloquent about the shift in policy than Mr. Perry's words. There are 60,000 NATO troops in Bosnia, enjoying complete military superiority over any possible combination of local forces, but nothing has been done to go after Bosnian Serb war criminals. "President" Radovan Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic, both under indictment by the U.N. war crimes tribunal, continue to rule the breakaway Bosnian Serb state.

The state, moreover, is coming under no effective pressure to open its territory

to returning refugees. 1.7 million of Bosnia's 4 million people are still refugees, and in recent weeks NATO troops have repeatedly turned back Muslim and Croatian groups seeking to visit homes and graves in Serbian-held territory because it is "too dangerous." (It would not be if NATO did its job.)

NATO has also refused to let its troops guard the various mass graves where U.N. investigators are trying to gather evidence about the Serbian-run genocide, though local commanders have acknowledged that the Serbs are destroying the evidence as quickly as possible.

Why this do-nothing attitude? The main reason is sheer timidity: a desperate desire not to expose NATO troops to any danger. Washington's need to avoid having any American troops ambushed or taken hostage in an election year is especially acute, so U.S. soldiers rarely move anywhere in anything less than four-vehicle convoys — which severely limits their usefulness.

As a result, there has been little progress even in integrating the Muslim and Croatian-controlled regions that are supposed to be the core of the reunited Bosnia. Only firm NATO pressure on this issue could ever get the cooperation of Croatian President Franjo Tudjman (who talks of the need to "Europeanise and civilise" Bosnian Muslims as though they were some inferior foreign breed), and the necessary pressure has not been applied.

Tudjman's policy, unchallenged, means that there will not be any nucleus around which Bosnia can be rebuilt. Instead, the

Croatian-populated districts of Bosnia are being stealthily integrated with Croatia itself. As for the Serbian-run part of Bosnia, its leaders still dream of integration with Serbia proper, and refuse almost all cooperation with the Bosnian authorities.

In these circumstances, the idea that there will actually be elections for the federal government of a reunited Bosnia this year, as required by the Dayton deal, is pure fantasy. The reality is that Croatia and Serbia are preparing to gobble up most of Bosnia, leaving only a landlocked Muslim-controlled rump state.

Is this shameful outcome what NATO really wants? It depends on which half of NATO you mean.

The United States is deeply unhappy about the impending final triumph of force over justice in Bosnia, but it will not risk any American lives to avert it. So Washington toys with the notion of arming the Bosnian Muslims so that they can resist the partition of Bosnia on their own — and at the same time it grows ever more determined to get all the American troops out by December 20.

The Europeans, who think they are more "realistic" than the Americans (they are actually just more cynical), have been trying to sell Bosnia's Muslims down the river and thus get rid of this embarrassing war almost from the moment the first shot was fired. Only the U.S. stopped them from achieving that goal long ago.

But now NATO's big European members have a new lever to use on Washington. Britain and France are also committed to pulling their troops out of

Bosnia on Dec. 20, which would probably reignite the war. But they might reconsider and stay for a while — if the U.S. does not arm the Muslims and wreck their plans.

The timid behaviour of the Americans in Bosnia pales in comparison with the base cowardice and treachery of the Europeans. In an earlier phase of the Bosnian war, British General Sir Michael Rose actually ordered his troops not to identify targets to NATO aircraft overhead, so as to thwart planned air strikes.

European policy is even harder to understand now that the Serbs have turned out to be paper tigers. Even after last autumn's massive NATO air strikes finally broke the Bosnian Serbs' will to go on fighting, appeasement has been the favoured strategy in most European capitals. And if their current policies prevail, then only two scenarios remain for next year in Bosnia.

If Croatia and Serbia go to war again over the Serbian-occupied strip of Eastern Slavonia, then Bosnian Muslims might be able to take advantage of the fighting to win back some more of the land they lost to the Serbs. But if Zagreb and Belgrade can make a deal on the peaceful division of the spoils, then the Muslims will end up with little more than a third of the old Bosnia.

For a brief moment last autumn, it looked as if the Western great powers had finally listened to their own rhetoric about upholding international law, defending human rights, and resisting aggression. But it was a very brief moment.

Nevertheless, China is becoming more dependent on Russia to modernise its armed forces, and the Yeltsin visit heralded new military cooperation agreements.

In addition, Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev told ITAR-TASS news agency Thursday that Russia had supplied China with 22 Sukhoi-27 fighter aircraft. Mr. Grachev also said Russia and China had agreed to intensify military cooperation, but did not elaborate.

"The United States will certainly try to minimise the importance of the rapprochement between Beijing and Moscow but the modernisation of the People's Liberation Army is at the same time disturbing for the Americans, who want to preserve their influence in the Asia-Pacific," said the western diplomat.

Between the fiscalists and the monetarists

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

THE CENTRAL bank's policy of preserving the level of liquidity at local banks by indirect controls, such as the purchase and sale (lately only sale) of certificates of deposit (CD), is a policy that seems distant from the overall picture. And while drying up all domestic liquidity through high interest rate CDs may work well for giving the dinar a facade of stability and contributing to the lowering of inflation (which was triggered by the increase in the sales tax last year), such a policy is impotent and adversely impacts the status of the unemployed. Therefore, I am bewildered when someone claims that the present monetary policy is the cause of the recent economic growth and the decrease in unemployment.

The history of this policy over the last two years is as follows: In 1995, interest rates increased from their 1994 level of 7.7 per cent and 7.94 per cent for three months and six month CDs, respectively, to 8.75 per cent and 9.5 per cent. The Central Bank did this by purchasing \$39.9 million worth of CDs in 1995. In 1996, the rate on three month and six month CDs jumped to 9.25 per cent and 9.5 per cent, causing the prime rate to rise indirectly to a value between 11.5 and 14 per cent, which is a very high rate for an investment-starved economy.

The claim that high interest rates help businesses become more efficient and selective in their investment, thereby improving their efficiency, is far from the whole truth because two things happen when the interest rate rises: first, businesses are crowded out of the market by the government which has been borrowing money indirectly (even if not all the excess is borrowed), thus leaving the banks with less money to lend; and second, businesses are faced with fewer and fewer investment opportunities that pay more than the interest rate.

For example, a business person would not borrow from the bank at 14 per cent to finance an operation that has a rate of return of 13 per cent because he/she would be losing at least 1 per cent of investment. Furthermore, capital efficiency improvement is strictly a long-run phenomenon that requires technical and technological advances which usually occur over extended periods of time as a result of many changes, among which prominently evidenced is institutional changes.

One of the most difficult things to do is separate technology from capital and evidence from around the world suggests that major technological improvements have usually resulted from the opening of trade and the threat of foreign competition.

Has this monetary policy caused capital to flow to Jordan in search of a high interest rate? No, capital

flows to countries where the expected rate of return on investment is highest, at least that is what Europe is experiencing right now. So forget about what they said in that first-year economic textbook and remember: capital chases after high profits; if the cost of borrowing is high, the profits from business ventures decrease which prevents the inflow of international investments.

At any rate, I think the government's fiscal policy is the one that presents us with the most challenge: last year we witnessed a 12.6 per cent increase in public spending because of the government's restructuring efforts; however, unemployment only decreased by 0.3 per cent from the previous year. Why? First, even the most devout "small government" advocate will agree that the best way to create jobs in the short run is through government spending.

Thus, Jordanian workers should have seen a significant increase in job opportunities, which they did not. I believe the answer lies in the fact that the jobs created were low-skilled jobs, so that foreign labour, willing to work for lower wages than the domestic work force, was able to capture most of the jobs. The proof: substantial economic growth occurred in mining (18 per cent growth rate), trade and tourism which grew by 9 per cent and a modest growth in the manufacturing sector.

Tourism has a low multiplier in Jordan because of the high dependence of this industry on imports. As tourism expands, our need to import increases, thus causing funds to flow out of the country in search of those luxury items that tourists require. As a result, funds that are spent on tourism are not as effective in generating employment opportunities as one would hope. Investment expansion in manufacturing leads to greater reductions in unemployment than do the above sectors. Additionally, if the industry that is expanding requires mainly unskilled labour, the expansion will lead to greater employment of non-Jordanian labourers.

I do believe that we need to have a model or framework of reference for the whole economy which can be used to guide us in the design of comprehensive optimal policies. We need to be able to say that the effect of this policy is to alter such and such by so much. Maybe then we could look at a policy mix that is less suppositional and more objective. After all, globalisation is the game we are to play and effective play requires that the whole team know the game plan.

Beijing plays the Russian card against Washington

By Philippe Massonnet
Agence France-Presse

BEIJING — The signing of a "strategic partnership" between China and Russia is a clear warning to the United States that Beijing will not let Washington steer world strategy alone, analysts said here Friday.

"For China, the manoeuvre is more anti-American than pro-Russian," said an Asian diplomat.

"China wants to become the great power of the 21st century and it needs allies, even temporary ones."

Russian President Boris Yeltsin and his Chinese counterpart, Jiang Zemin, issued the declaration

after meeting Thursday and hailed it as the foundation for a new world order.

The two sides also said they were refusing to allow one country to "monopolise the managing of international affairs."

Mr. Yeltsin's visit to China, which ends Saturday, saw the signing of 15 accords that will permit further economic and military cooperation between the giant neighbours.

The Asian diplomat said the "strategic partnership" was part of China's attempt to counter the influence of the United States after months of tense bilateral relations based on the Taiwan issue

and trade battles.

But as spectacular as the rapprochement between Beijing and Moscow appears — illustrated further by the opening of a "hotline" between the two governments — it does not, however, represent a new alliance, some analysts in the Chinese capital said.

"This isn't based on ideology as was the case in the 1950s during the cold war, it represents a much more pragmatic approach," said a western diplomat.

"Despite the hugs and kisses, I don't believe this is a love fest between the former rivals, just a marriage of convenience," he said.

Nevertheless, China is becoming more dependent on Russia to modernise its armed forces, and the Yeltsin visit heralded new military cooperation agreements.

In addition, Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev told ITAR-TASS news agency Thursday that Russia had supplied China with 22 Sukhoi-27 fighter aircraft. Mr. Grachev also said Russia and China had agreed to intensify military cooperation, but did not elaborate.

"The United States will certainly try to minimise the importance of the rapprochement between Beijing and Moscow but the modernisation of the People's Liberation Army is at the same time disturbing for the Americans, who want to preserve their influence in the Asia-Pacific," said the western diplomat.

Officially, the decision to sign the border security agreement — which also includes the former Soviet states of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan — in Shanghai was made by the five nations so it would be independent of Mr. Yeltsin's state visit. But some observers find this a weak explanation, saying the pact could have been signed in any other large city.

Shanghai is also the bastion of Jiang, and the head of the Communist Party needs to take every opportunity to reinforce his position as the heir apparent to Deng Xiaoping, the observers said.

Reforms largely satisfying

(Continued from page 1)

hnpce." said Mustafa Hamarneh, director of the centre. "It shows that since the initial stages of democracy, people feel that nothing has really happened with political openness."

"But people are also conscious of what they have been given and want more," he said.

More than half of 1,200 people surveyed (55.6 per cent) said that none of Jordan's 22 political parties was representative of their political beliefs and needs, and approximately 29 per cent of those surveyed said they did not know if any of the parties were representative of their beliefs.

Although the Islamic Action Front, the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, is still considered the most representative party among those polled, support for the party has decreased drastically since the centre's last survey in 1995.

Last year, 11.42 per cent of those surveyed said that the IAF was the most representative. But this year, only 7.75 per cent considered the party to be most representative of their political beliefs. In 1993, 19 per cent said that the IAF was most representative.

Al Ahd was the party most identified with after the IAF, with 1.33 per cent of those surveyed saying they identified with its beliefs and ideologies; (down from 1.82 per cent in 1995).

Identification with all other parties was less than one per cent among those polled.

Correspondingly, membership in political parties has progressively declined since parties were legalised in 1992, and desire to join political parties is waning.

Only 1.4 per cent of those included in the 1993 survey officially belonged to political parties, and since that year, that number has decreased to 1.05 per cent and 0.5 per cent in 1995 and 1996 respectively.

Nearly 94.5 per cent of those polled had no desire to join a political party. In 1993, 6.3 per cent of those surveyed expressed an interest in joining a party, whereas today only two per cent had any interest in joining one.

More than one-third of those questioned said they did not know to what extent the political parties had been successful, and 33.8 per cent qualified Jordan's political parties as "little successful" to "unsuccessful".

Despite a general apathy demonstrated towards party life, the results of the poll showed that Jordanians are not necessarily apolitical. They tended to show, however, a much greater interest in parliamentary affairs and exhibited greater satisfaction with parliamentary performance than political parties' performance.

Around 49 per cent said they were somewhat satisfied with the current parliament's performance, and a substantial majority said they intended to participate in 1997 parliamentary elections. More than 77 per cent of women and 75 per cent of men said they intended to vote.

More than half of those polled also supported changes in electoral law currently being debated in the country.

More than 60 per cent supported increasing the number of parliamentary seats; increasing the number of voting districts from 20 to 32; and lowering the voting age from 19 to 18.

Slightly more than 70 per cent support amending the law to utilise administrative zones drawn last November as electoral constituencies, which would increase the number of electoral districts from 20 to 32.

More than 80 per cent support an amendment to the elections law that would require that voting be conducted according to a national number as currently being proposed. It has been suggested that a national number would prevent people from voting in more than one district as opposed to the current system.

Roughly 68 per cent of those surveyed are in favour of a parliamentary quota for women, and 58.5 per cent favour a quota for minorities. Roughly 80 per cent of women and 58 per cent of men surveyed supported such a quota.

The percentage of those who support a quota for women remains nearly unchanged from 1995 when 67.5 per cent endorsed it.

The poll also queried participants on their attitudes towards parliamentarians who also serve as cabinet members.

Twenty-two parliamentary deputies now serve in the 31-member cabinet of ministers, and although the practice is not unusual, it has been criticised by some quarters as distorting the checks and balances system, among other shortcomings.

More than half of those surveyed said that the two roles should be kept separate, while nearly 40 per cent said the division of labour was an acceptable practice.

The questionnaire offered possible reasons as to agreement or disagreement with the combination of roles. The results showed that: 44.8 per cent said that as a minister is a participant in the decision-making process, he cannot, as a parliamentarian, effectively serve as a watchdog over the government; 46.2 per cent said that a person serving as both minister and parliamentarian does not give enough time to parliamentary duties; 42.6 per cent said that a parliamentarian who becomes a minister somehow loses his relationship with his constituents; and 40.5 per cent said that a minister uses his position for electoral purposes.

This year, the centre added three new categories of questions to the survey, which inquired about participation in social organisations other than political parties, attitudes towards professional unions and attitudes towards and the influence of newspapers.

"We added these categories because we want to know about the tools by which people express themselves," said Mohammad Al Masri, polling director of the survey.

"One of the reasons we added this was that we saw in 1995 that people weren't satisfied with parties, so we thought we should look into their other activities — how do people express themselves?" he said.

The poll shows that slightly more than 10 per cent participate in some kind of social organisation, with the greatest participation being in sports clubs.

Professional unions, which have served as political fora in the absence of political parties and currently engaged in a tug-of-war with the government concerning their political influence over their members, should stick to professional issues, was the opinion of 43.3 per cent of those polled.

However, 27.5 per cent said that the role of the unions does not have to be limited to professional work.

Also for the first time, the survey included a question regarding participation in jaha — a delegation of notables used for inter-trial conflict resolution.

Of 600 men questioned, 46.2 per cent said they had been asked to participate in a jaha, and 96.4 per cent of those said they had actually participated.

"Compared to political parties, this vehicle is much more active," said Dr. Hamarneh, "which again shows us that political parties aren't the only venues of political expression."

More than half of the sample said that they read daily newspapers, but only 19.8 per cent said that they read columnists consistently.

Thirty-eight per cent said they read weekly papers, but only 8.3 per cent read columnists in weeklies.

"This shows that columnists have much less influence than people might have thought," said Mr. Masri.

Hong Kong's Viet boat people policy jolted by riot

By Peter Humphrey
Reuter

HONG KONG — Hong Kong's hard-nosed policy on imprisoning and forcibly sending home Vietnamese boat people has suffered a severe jolt from a bloody riot, kindling fears of major violence ahead of the colony's mid-1997 return to China.

As the flames were doused at the blazing Whitehead prison camp Friday after a riot and mass jailbreak, the hard line came under scrutiny from officials and lawyers, already arguing over whether the government is violating human rights.

China is insisting all Vietnamese be kicked out before it recovers sovereignty over Hong Kong in mid-1997.

More than 200 inmates — many of them have been cooped up for as long as eight years — stormed out of the camp Friday after setting it ablaze and taking 15 guards hostage and leaving 50 people injured on both sides of the battlefield.

Although security forces swiftly brought the riot under control and hunted for the fugitives, it was more than the smell of tear gas that left a bitter taste in local mouths.

"Detention was a rotten policy in the first place and this should have been foreseen

from the beginning," said Pam Baker, a human rights lawyer with the refugee concern assistance group.

Hong Kong recently won Vietnam's cooperation to speed up forced returns of boat people. But it suffered a blow when the highest appeal court ruled that some were illegally detained.

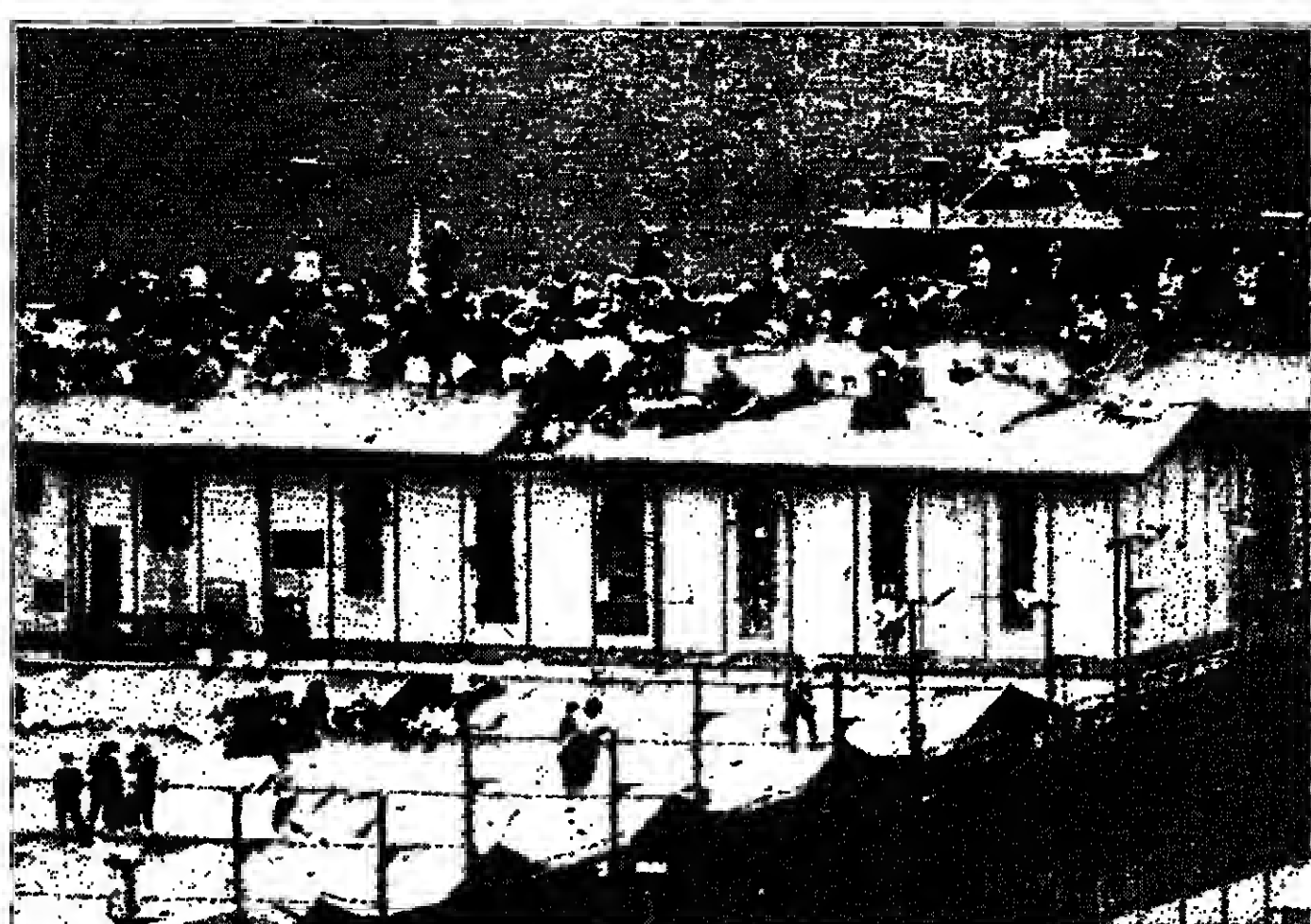
The Hong Kong government is moving rapidly to enact a law within weeks that will plug that loophole.

But U.S. congressmen added their voice to those of human rights groups in Hong Kong this week, lobbying the government not to create a precedent of abusive unlimited detention.

About 18,000 Vietnamese are held in prison-like conditions in Hong Kong camps. Most are defined as non-refugees and therefore illegal immigrants who face no threat of persecution back home.

But refugee lawyer Rob Brook said: "There are many genuine refugees left in the detention centres who have a genuine fear of persecution if they return to Vietnam."

"If you put what are generally ordinary families in these appalling conditions of detention for such a long period, you don't give them a fair crack of the whip as far as screening goes, genuine refugees are



A police launch patrols the water surrounding protesters inside Hong Kong's Whitehead detention centre. Some 200 inmates, including families, dashed to freedom after a dawn uprising forced the gates open, on the day that many were to be forcibly removed for repatriation to Vietnam (Reuter photo)

screened out," Mr. Brook told Reuters. The migrants are the last of a flood of people who fled Vietnam after the 1975 Communist victory in the Vietnam war.

Some 30,000 remain in camps in southeast Asian countries, but Hong Kong has the largest number. Friday's riot brought

the drama back under the spotlight. "This is certainly something much more ferocious than anything we've seen before," Selina Chow, vice-chairman of the Hong Kong legislature's security committee, told local radio.

Calling for measures to ensure there was no repeat, she said: "As we are stepping up

repatriation... We have a bunch of very desperate people and it's inevitable that these exercises will get more and more violent because of the level of resistance," she said.

"I'm afraid this is something Hong Kong people have to put up with for the time being, but we're doing all we can to solve the problem," said deputy

home affairs Director Lee Lap-Sun.

One of China's top officials in the territory, Zhang Junsheng, blamed the trouble on the British government because it had allowed Hong Kong to be used as a first port of asylum, attracting waves of refugees.

Mr. Zhang reiterated China's policy that all boat people must be

removed from Hong Kong by mid-1997. "I hope in the brief 400 more days left, the British government can act responsibly."

"This has created great pressure economically and spiritually on Hong Kong people since they (Vietnamese) keep on making trouble," Mr. Zhang said in a television interview.

Cleaning Cairo — development vs. environment

By Dalia Baligh
The Associated Press

CAIRO — Six-month-old Hassan is suffering another asthma attack, his breath is laboured and his chest heaving.

Swathed in blankets, he gets a shot that allows him to breathe — for a little while at least.

It's a depressing routine for the toddler in this sprawling, congested city. Once known as a city of a thousand minarets and elegant, tree-lined avenues by the Nile, the Cairo of today has the highest levels of lead and other air pollutants in the world.

"There are only two solutions: his parents can move away, or they can remove the cement factories," said the frustrated doctor who gave Hassan the shot.

As she spoke, towering smokestacks spewed thick, yellow cement dust into the bazy air of the Cairo suburb of Massara.

Add to that the fumes

from lead smelters and leather tanneries sprinkled throughout Cairo, plus more than 1 million cars. Ten thousand tons of garbage produced by Cairo's 16 million people make it worse.

In short, the city is killing its people.

Although there are no firm figures on deaths, the U.S. Agency for International Development says Cairo could save 4,000 to 16,000 lives a year by reducing the levels of particles in the air.

Hassan's doctor, who agreed to talk to a reporter on condition she not be identified because of fears for her job at a government clinic, said one-third of the children in Massara have lung diseases, asthma or allergies.

The government is trying to help. It recently introduced unleaded fuel for the first cars that can use it and purchased buses that run on cleaner-burning natural gas. Some cement factories

have been fitted with filters, and some lead smelters have been moved out of the city.

But many people fear the effort is too little to make a dent in the problem. They worry, too, that laws against air pollution will be like law 48 of 1982, which was meant to stop dumping of industrial waste, trash and sewage in the Nile. It has been largely ignored.

An ash-coloured cloud hangs over the capital almost every day. Blue, cloudless skies that once complemented the city's view of the river are increasingly rare.

In the southern suburbs near the factories, cement dust covers anything cleaned in a matter of seconds. Trees are wilted, and laundry set out to dry has to be covered with a canopy of plastic sheets.

The city, however, is in a bind. The government wants to clean up Cairo — or at least stop it from getting dirtier — but does not

want to sacrifice much-needed development.

Officials fear making standards too stringent or requiring costly anti-pollution equipment could shut down some businesses and even large cement factories — a serious worry in a country with an estimated 30 per cent unemployment rate.

There has been an effort to move both industry and people to satellite cities around Cairo or new desert cities. But it has not been very successful because of Egyptians' several thousand-year-old habit of residing near the Nile.

And in some cases, putting factories in satellite cities has added to traffic jams — and auto pollution — because people commute from Cairo to the factories outside.

"We have many environmental problems," acknowledged Tarek Genena, director of the Technical Cooperation Office for Environment, a newly

established government group.

But he added: "We have to take into consideration that we are a developing country. We need to protect natural resources and health and not slow down development."

It is the trade-off many Third World cities face: development at all costs, followed by catastrophic environmental degradation.

In Cairo, that catastrophe is looming. U.S. Aid says the Egyptian capital's air has the highest levels of particulate matter and lead in the world. Other major pollutants far exceed standards in the United States or limits set by the World Health Organisation.

Exhaust from badly tuned cars and antiquated public buses has made the air noticeably worse in just a few years. This has raised fears about Cairo's children since studies show that exposure to high lead levels in the early years can lower

intelligence.

"It will reduce the IQ level for a whole generation," said Amin Al Sbarkawi, an environment and development officer at the U.N. development programme.

Cairo traffic policemen are in an unenviable situation. Standing for eight hours a day in streets where traffic is often at a standstill, policemen complain of the never-ending exhaust.

"When I get off duty, I have a headache, I cough and my ears ring from the noise," said Ahmad, a policeman who also feared for his job if he gave his full name.

In Massara, the children have only the narrow, unpaved streets to play in, with the cement factories looming in the background.

Marwa Ahmad, a 7-year-old girl standing outside her home, said: "I like playing with my friends in the street, but it makes me cough and makes my eyes hurt."

Summit

(Continued from page 1)

information to the Palestinians (about Jordan's role and interests), the official said. "It is now clear that all that information was wrong."

It was a reference to allegations levelled by Mr. Arafat, head of the Palestinian National

Authority (PNA) that Hamas leaders based in Jordan were guiding anti-Israeli attacks by Hamas activists in the occupied territories and within the Jewish state.

Jordan denied the charges but played down the issue in an obvious effort to avoid a war of words with the Palestinians.

Iraq sees some progress in talks

(Continued from page 1)

medicine.

Iraq has been under a crippling sanctions regime since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Since returning to the United Nations on Monday for the fourth round of talks, Mr. Anbari has consistently attacked Britain and the United States for insisting on amendments to the draft agreement, which, he said, had been worked out with the United Nations on April 10.

The two countries have said they want to ensure that Baghdad complies strictly with U.N. requirements on aid distribution and banking issues.

Iraq has contacted the three other Security Council

permanent members — China, France, and Russia — to press its case.

Mr. Anbari and Mr. Corell said they would continue negotiations, which are focusing on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 986, during the weekend.

Meanwhile, Iraq hit out at the United States blaming it for inflicting misery on the people of Iraq and the world.

The government newspaper Al Jumhuriya also held Washington accountable for Israel's latest attack on Lebanon, the U.N. trade embargo on Iraq, sanctions against Libya and the crises in Afghanistan and Algeria.

Lebanon truce talks adjourn

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Burns said earlier he was confident outstanding questions would be settled "rather quickly" after the meeting.

Despite the failure to complete the arrangements, Israeli officials were also optimistic. "The basics were laid today," one said. "I think the Americans will try to work out the details over the weekend."

The unsigned ceasefire "understanding" left most of the details of the group to be negotiated later, including what its precise functions would be and where it would be located.

Participants declined to discuss the sticking points but before the meeting began, Syrian envoy Walid Al Muahm said there were differences over the structure of the group.

Syria and Lebanon wanted it focused on military aspects of the ceasefire, while Israel and the United States wanted political and economic dimensions included.

Syria accused Israel on Saturday of hampering the creation of the monitoring group by trying to give it a "political character."

"The monitoring group is a technical one and does not

have a political mission to fulfill," the official government daily Tishrin said.

"It will include military delegates who will issue reports on any complaints" over violations of the ceasefire accord, the paper added.

"Israel wants to confuse the situation by giving its own interpretations of the ceasefire accord after the failure of its military operation in Lebanon," the paper added.

"It is pushing for the creation of a group with a political character with the goal of replacing the (peace) negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks."

Lebanon said meanwhile it supported the U.N. mission in the south of the country and stressed that Israel would not succeed in its calls for a reappraisal of the peace force's operation in Lebanon.

Speaking at a press conference in Beirut, Lebanese Foreign Minister Fares Bouez said his country was committed to supporting the efforts of the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and rejected Israel's bid to question the force's mandate.

"We Lebanese consider the U.N.'s role to be very important," he said "It is not the first time Israel has tried

to question the work of the United Nations Interim force in Lebanon."

He said Israel "was attacking the legitimate stance of the U.N. because it would like to have at its disposal a body which hides its (Israel's) real intentions and errors."

Israel said Thursday it would reconsider its cooperation with peacekeepers, who set up base in South Lebanon 18 years ago to monitor an Israeli withdrawal.

Israel also called on members of the U.N. Security Council to reconsider the

mandate of the force when it comes up for renewal in July.

The Jewish state was reacting to the publication of a U.N. report which concluded that Israel's shelling of a U.N. compound in Cana in South Lebanon on April 18, in which 102 civilians died, was probably deliberate.

But asked if he was worried that UNIFIL's mandate would not be renewed, Mr. Bouez said: "I do not think so."

"The Americans have given us no indication this might happen up to now," he added.

Peres

(Continued from page 1)

in the Middle East but events were moving so quickly that the achievement of peace was a race against time.

"Never before was the opportunity for peace so attainable, so visible, so reachable, with so little time to grasp it," he told the audience, which included Dutch Queen Beatrix.

He said a good start had been made. "There is peace with Egypt. There is peace with Jordan. There is a peace process with the Palestinians. We have normalised relations of one sort or another with seven Arab states and maintain a liaison with some more."

Mr. Peres was the last to address the audience, following speeches from the other medal winners, Northern Ireland politician John Hume, former Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie and Jacques de Milliano, who accepted the medal on behalf of medical aid group "Medecins Sans Frontieres."

A fifth honour, the "International Four Freedoms Award," was presented to King Juan Carlos of Spain.

Peres to visit Tunisia

Mr. Peres will make an historical first visit to Tunis by an Israeli premier next week and then meet with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in Paris, Israel's army radio reported Friday.

Jordan, S. Arabia open talks tomorrow to revitalise economic cooperation

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordanian and Saudi officials met Monday in Riyadh to review economic relations and new agreements to strengthen cooperation and set the agenda for a ministerial level meeting in mid-June in the first such encounter in more than five years.

Mohammad Smadi, secretary-general of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, who will head the seven-member delegation to the Riyadh meeting, said Jordan was very optimistic that the talks would provide a new impetus to Jordanian-Saudi relations.

The Riyadh meeting will be the first of a joint Jordanian-Saudi commission on economic relations since the Gulf crisis sparked by the

Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

Jordan and Saudi Arabia are bound by a bilateral agreement on economic ties dating back to 1962. Dr. Smadi noted, adding that the joint commission used to meet every year until the Gulf crisis.

Despite the strain in ties since then, "Jordanian-Saudi economic relations have been steady," and "now we would like to look at the various aspects of cooperation and study means to enhance them," said Dr. Smadi, who is scheduled to leave for Saudi Arabia on Sunday.

The meeting will take into consideration "the various developments in the region and in the international scene over the past five years," particularly that both Jordan and Saudi Arabia are seeking to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Dr.

Smadi told the Jordan Times.

The entry of the two countries to the WTO and a proposed partnership agreement between Jordan and the European Union (EU) necessitates a close review of the Kingdom's economic relations with countries in the region, said Dr. Smadi, whose delegation would include representatives of other ministries and departments.

"We need to make our relations in conformity with the requirements of the WTO and the partnership agreement with the EU," he said.

Dr. Smadi said the meeting would also set the agenda for a June 14 meeting between Industry and Trade Ali Abul Ragheh and his Saudi counterpart Osama Al Faqeh.

It is expected that the two ministers would sign several agreements on economic and trade relations as well as land

and sea transport between Jordan and Saudi Arabia, said Dr. Smadi.

Trade between Jordan and Saudi Arabia went up by 12 per cent in 1995, with Saudi exports to Jordan rising by 28 per cent to \$127 million, official figures show.

Jordanian officials have said they expected trade between the two countries to rise further during fiscal 1996, as interaction between Saudi and Jordanian businessmen was being intensified through the chambers of commerce and industry of the two sides as well as other private sector institutions such as businessmen's associations and export agencies.

Annual figures released by the Department of Statistics said the volume of trade between the two countries in 1995 totalled \$161.7 million, Jordanian dinars (\$224.7

million), with Saudi exports to Jordan accounting for JD 91.4 million (\$127 million) and Jordanian exports to Saudi Arabia worth JD 70.3 million (\$97.7 million).

These figures compare with the 1994 volume of trade worth JD 143.47 million (\$199.4 million), with Saudi exports to Jordan accounting for JD 71.21 million (\$98.98 million) and imports of Jordanian products JD 72.26 million (\$99.05 million).

The figures also showed that Saudi Arabia ranked first among Arab countries exporting non-oil products to Jordan. The main Saudi exports to Jordan are canned juices and fruits as well as processed food, cooking oil and medium-tee industrial products.

Jordan's exports to Saudi Arabia include live animals, vegetables, and pharmaceutical products.

Netanyahu would wean Israel off U.S. aid if elected prime minister

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Likud Party leader Benjamin Netanyahu expects to sell off 50 government firms and ultimately wean Israel off its \$1.2 billion in annual U.S. economic aid if elected prime minister on May 29.

In an interview published Friday, Mr. Netanyahu told the Jerusalem Post newspaper: "We are going to try to pass during the first 100 days key legislation for privatising the economy and services in most areas of Israeli life."

Mr. Netanyahu, 47, who is challenging Labour Party Prime Minister Shimon Peres, 72, said: "I intend to privatise 50 companies in this term."

"That is in my judgment, actually a modest goal out of 160 companies, because I think we have to privatise many, many more. But this is a goal that I am going to set and of course to date the num-

ber that have been privatised is a number you can count on the fingers of one hand," he added.

Israel receives \$1.8 billion a year in U.S. military aid and \$2 billion in economic aid — the most of any aid recipient — and Mr. Netanyahu said he would maintain the level in the short term.

"In the short-term I would maintain it but I would adopt a long-term plan to wean Israel off American financial aid beginning with the \$1.2 billion economic aid. If our economy grows like I believe it would, then \$1.2 billion of economic aid will become insignificant. I believe I can achieve this and wean Israel away from the \$1.2 billion within one to two terms in office," he said.

The U.S. administration in 1991 used \$10 billion in loan guarantees to pressure the previous Likud-led government headed by

Yitzhak Shamir to enter peace talks and withheld the guarantees until a Labour-led government came to power in 1992.

The Likud leader, who opposes swapping occupied land for peace with Palestinians and Syria alike, said he would reduce taxes by cutting the budget for Palestinians, kibbutz collective settlements and for Kupat Holim health fund.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, MAY 12, 1996

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Flight Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Be off early today with close friends who are dynamic and you can gain a great deal which is worthwhile. Go along with their good ideas for a new project and you will discover the success you can have.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Get out in the public early today and show your finest capabilities to all you encounter and you can gain added prestige. Be true to yourself later this evening and you can find the added confidence to succeed.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Study into new interests today and take on the very best of such so that the days ahead can be much brighter for you. Later this evening you can be close friends for a night on the town to just relax and be quite social.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Add new zest to your relationship today with those you love the most and make the days ahead more electrifying. Later tonight you should spend some quality time with your mate in some special romantic location.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Make it a point today to get in touch with those who are successful in lines different from your own and learn a great deal. Later tonight you can meet with a bigwig and discuss all of the new information you possess.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Add something new to regular routines and you can gain greater benefits from them. Fellow associates have some clever ideas for you concerning a new method of operation which will make you successful.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Get your shopping and other duties handled early today so that you have plenty of time to socialise. This is a good time later this evening any extra time with close friends and your loved ones.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Get with close friends who are doers and can express themselves very well and you benefit from their association. It is a good time tonight for you to meet with some knowledgeable individuals who can help with a new project.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Look into all kinds of mechanisms which can be useful to you and make your life easier. Later tonight it is a good idea for you to consult with a knowledgeable individual to discuss a difficulty you are having with you duties.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Study your possessions today and you know how to increase their value and make them more beautiful at the same time. You can meet with your mate for a romantic time tonight and act the same way as you first met.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You have unusual ways of getting ahead faster today, so utilise them at this time. Listen to fellow associates' ideas carefully for if you do you will learn the methods of operation which can make you successful.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) During your spare time today, get new ideas which you can test on others, however, say nothing about them first. Relax at home with your loved ones and have a peaceful time with them under your own roof.

Birthstone of May: Emerald — Citrine

Jordan tourism sector picks up in first quarter of 1996

AMMAN (R) — Over 223,000 tourists flocked to Jordan in the first quarter of 1996 to see its legendary sites, making it a record year after a sharp fall caused by the 1990 Gulf crisis.

Tourism Minister Saleh Irshaidat said Saturday.

He said the tourism sector registered a 19.25 per cent rise in the first three months of 1996 with 223,612 mainly American and

European tourists visiting compared with 187,509 in the same period in 1995.

Some 26,143 Israelis visited in the first three months, compared to 21,914 last year — flooding the ancient Nabatean

city of Petra and the Greco-Roman city of Jerash.

Tourism has shown the most visible gains from Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel ending a 46-year-state of war between the two neighbours and encouraging them to market their countries' ancient riches on package tours worldwide.

But this sector has also shown great vulnerability to recent violence in the region. A spate of suicide bombings in Israel in February and March and Israel's 17-day blitz of Lebanon in

late April had its toll on tourism.

Jordanian tour operators said they received cancellations for this month, mainly because of the Israeli bombardment of Lebanon and uncertainty related to Israel's general elections on May 29.

Mr. Irshaidat said he predicted a 25 per cent increase in the number of visitors in 1996 from a total of 1,073,549 in 1995, up 25.18 per cent on 857,610 in 1994.

"This hinges on the general political atmosphere prevailing in the region, but all indicators point that

we will have at least 1,350,000 tourists in 1996," he said.

The figure could increase further as Jordan expects more Arab Gulf nationals to visit following major improvements in bilateral ties from strains caused by the Gulf crisis, sparked by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

Most in the six-nation oil-rich Gulf Cooperation Council, shunned Jordan as a

destination for its pro-Iraqi support and opted for Egypt and Syria, which took part in the U.S.-led military alliance that freed Kuwait seven months later.

Mr. Irshaidat said he expected tourism revenue to reach \$1 billion in 1996 from \$700 million in 1995

a main foreign currency earner for Jordan after expatriate remittances and exports of potash and phosphates.

Violence cripples 10 per cent of Algeria's industry

PARIS (R) — Algeria's civil strife has reduced the nation's industrial capacity by about 10 per cent but the decline in production is slowing, an Algerian official report said Saturday.

"Technical stoppages due to sabotage of production tools and equipment and the current security climate have caused nearly 10 per cent loss of overall (industrial) production," the industry ministry said in a report quoted by the official Algerian news agency APS.

The authorities estimate that the Algerian economy has suffered more than \$2 billion in losses because of Muslim guerrillas sabotage in the past four years.

Despite the civil strife's

impact, the Algerian industrial sector has stemmed its decline by posting minus 0.5 per cent growth in 1995 against minus eight per cent in 1994, the report said.

Industrial sector production rose 32 per cent in value in 1995 against 1994 and registered a turnover estimated at 315 billion dinars (\$5.9 billion) in 1995 in comparison with 239 billion dinars (\$4.5 billion) in the previous year, the report said.

Mechanical engineering industries output rose by 16 per cent, electrical and electronic industries by 14 per cent, while the iron and steel industry and building materials

branch increased respectively by two, and three per cent, the report went on.

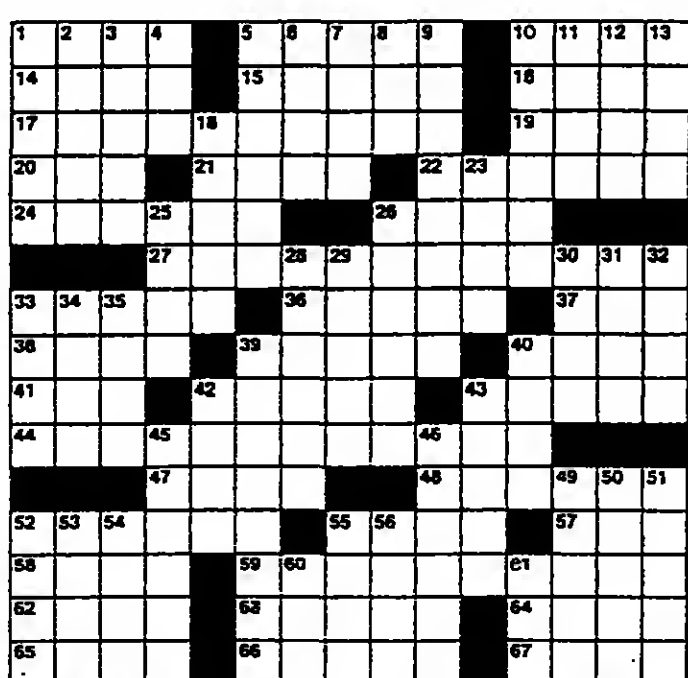
The Algerian economy grew more than 3.2 per cent in 1995 after many years of recession and the authorities expect more than 5.8 per cent growth in 1996, according to government and International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts.

Oil and gas provide more than 90 per cent of Algeria's foreign exchange. An estimated 50,000 people have been killed in Algeria's violence pitting Muslim militants against government forces.

Since early 1992 when authorities cancelled a general election which the Islamists were set to win.

THE Daily Crossword by Don Johnson

- ACROSS**
- Rein in
 - Scarlett's love
 - Aspect
 - Nautical word
 - Suggestive of the supernatural
 - Solo
 - Make simple
 - Knex
 - Period of time
 - Breathing sound
 - Gratitude
 - Peril
 - Anjou
 - Ciscoes
 - Donkeys
 - Enticed
 - Lamprey
 - Suffrage
 - Decorous
 - Deadly poison
 - Mine output
 - Broad collars
 - Studied carefully
 - Honky-tonk
 - Fabled birds
 - Ostentatious show
 - Patterned fabric
 - Material used in making glass
 - Edge
 - Woe is me
 - Flowerlike manne animal
 - Function
 - Hackneyed
 - corner
 - Desideratum
 - Looks at suggestively
 - Amusing one



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O.P.E.C.	A.B.E.T.	M.E.D.A.L.
T.O.T.A.	T.I.A.R.E.	A.R.E.N.A.
L.E.A.P.	A.S.T.R.A.	T.R.A.I.L.
T.H.E.B.L.A.C.K.	P.E.A.R.L.	
F.A.L.L.	R.I.O.T.	
C.R.E.E.L.	T.I.A.R.O.	A.L.A.W.
L.O.C.A.T.E.	D.A.M.S.	A.R.A.
A.S.T.R.I.N.G.	O.P.F.E.A.R.S.	
R.I.T.A.	C.R.A.B.	T.R.I.V.I.E.T.
E.N.D.S.	A.I.S.E.A.	E.R.A.S.E.
E.R.G.	F.O.N.T.	
M.O.T.H.E.R.O.F.	P.E.A.R.L.	
L.O.T.T.O.	A.L.A.E.	X.I.X.I.I.
O.A.T.E.N.	H.E.I.R.	I.C.O.N.
S.I.T.O.R.E.	S.O.R.A.	S.A.N.K.I.

- DOWN**
- Looked over, with intent to rob
 - Extremist
 - Showed over
 - Skip occupant
 - Comment
 - "War is —"
 - PA city
 - Preserve
 - Vacillated
 - Hunting expedition
 - Golf club
 - Dagger
 - Cale sign
 - Locations
 - Callous
 - Happiness
 - the thought!
 - Singer John and others
 - Ti (legendary Chinese emperor
 - Close
 - Hoofer Kelly
 - Double-ripper
 - Declare
 - Carolina rail
 - Let it stand!
 - one's ribs
 - Dutch colonist
 - Cupid
 - Cover with metal
 - Flubbed out
 - Thinks
 - Bouquet
 - Greasy spoon
 - Correct texts
 - Rats!
 - African plant
 - He
 - Go under
 - Merit
 - Unit of work
 - Singer Davis

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen

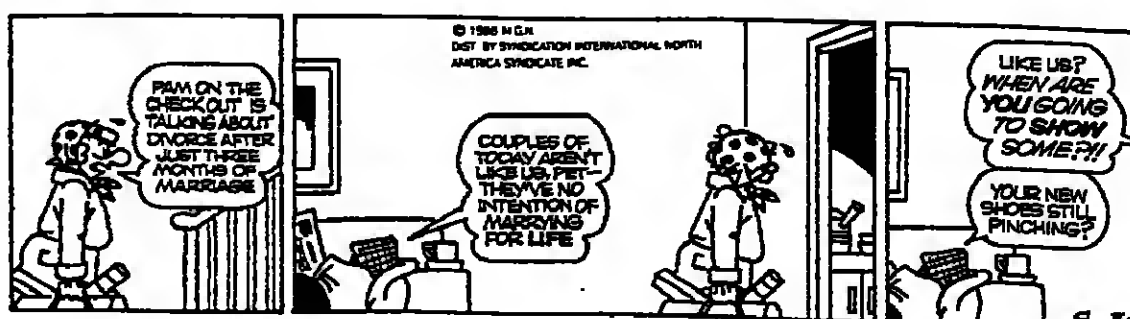


"We're out of milk, but barbecue sauce on cereal isn't half bad!"

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



Japan and South Korea battle to host World Cup

TOKYO (AP) — Perhaps it was inevitable that the bidding to host the 2002 soccer World Cup would have had trouble.

After all, the only two candidates are South Korea and Japan, two countries with a history of bad blood.

As decision day draws near, South Korea has worked itself into a frenzy of national fervor. Japan, meanwhile, is spending lavishly and helping to whip up a war of words by suggesting its rival is too backward to host the Cup.

What it comes down to is the 21-man FIFA executive committee, which will announce its decision on June 1 at its headquarters in Zurich, Switzerland.

"The campaign is very intense," said Asian Football Confederation general Peter Velappan. "We have been very concerned about this because millions of dollars are being spent. This is unhealthy."

Asian Football Confederation President Sultan Ahmad Shah of Malaysia asked FIFA back in March to consider a joint bid by the two countries as a way to diffuse the rivalry. UEFA President Lennart Johansson, and seven of his fellow European on the FIFA executive committee, also suggested a joint-host.

Even though South Korea recently said it would be willing, FIFA has rejected the idea saying it was against its rules and impractical.

Passions between these two countries with a tortured and intertwined history have been inflamed by the bidding war, and now national pride is at stake.

Nowhere was that clearer than at a match between the Japanese and South Korean national teams last month in Malaysia. Some Korean fans held up a sign saying "tok-do

is our land" — a reference to a territorial dispute with Japan over a rocky outcropping in the Sea of Japan.

In Seoul, talk of the cup bid fills the air. Kim Young-Sam has declared that winning the bid is a top priority of his government.

Television stations run programmes devoted to the World Cup, and a record number of viewers tuned in to watch South Korea's team win the March match against Japan.

Of course, the bitter history between the two countries has only helped deepen Korean passions. Japan colonised the Korean peninsula from 1910 to 1945, and in recent years Japanese politicians have frequently raised uprisings by trying to defend the colonisation and Japanese aggression in World War II.

Kim Ho-Yong, a Seoul taxi driver, likens the Cup bidding competition to an important soccer match: "I'd be happy if our national team beats a foreign country — but I'd be much happier if we beat the Japanese."

Japan has at most a mild fever for the cup; television shows and politicians rarely discuss the bidding, and many average people are unaware it's even taking place.

But that doesn't mean Japan is ready, in a fit of neighbourly benevolence, to let South Korea be host.

For one thing, too much money is at stake. Japan has spent nearly \$60 million on its bid, according to bidding committee chief spokesman Toshiaki Koyama.

Japan is handicapped by its relatively weak soccer history. It won the 1992 Asian Cup, but before that never got past the first round. It didn't qualify for the finals until 1988 and has never qualified for the World Cup.

It has played a domestic cup tournament since 1946, began a league in 1965 but has only had a fully professional league since 1993 — the J-League.

Instead, Japan is offering hardware. It promises to build 11 new stadiums at a cost of around \$5 billion as well as "virtual stadiums" with giant 3-D television screens for people who can't get to the matches.

And Japanese officials are none too delicate about stressing points that are sure to grate on Korean sensibilities: Japan is a much bigger and richer country with more advanced transport and communications.

"Could they accept 2 million visitors all at once?" asked Kunishige Kamamoto, the star of Japan 1968 Olympic bronze medal-winning soccer team and now a member of parliament.

Kamamoto even alleged a few months back that South Korea was trying to bribe FIFA executive committee members, though in an interview he backed off and said he didn't know if such charges were true. South Korea vigorously denies any impropriety.

South Korea counts Japan's financial advantage with its soccer pedigree, not exactly comparable to Germany or Brazil, but one of it not the best in Asia.

It has won the Asian cup twice (1956, 1960), finished runner-up three more times (1972, 1980, 1988); won the Asian games soccer title three times; and qualified four times for the World Cup, including the last three.

It also has had a professional league since 1993. The viciousness of the competition has led Johansson and a few others to push harder for the joint-bid approach.



Houston Rockets' Hakeem Olajuwon (right) blocks Seattle Super Sonics forward Shawn Kemp during first quarter action. The Rockets were playing the Super Sonics in game three of

the second round play-offs at the Summit in Houston May 10. Seattle won 115 to 112 to take a three game lead in the best of seven series (Reuters photo)

Sonics go up 3-0 on Rockets, Magic 2-0 over Hawks

HOUSTON (R) — Gary Payton and Detlef Schrempf scored 28 points apiece as the Seattle SuperSonics rallied from a 16-point first-quarter deficit for a 115-112 victory over the Houston Rockets Friday, pushing the two-time defending NBA champions to the brink of playoff elimination.

The SuperSonics, up three games to none, can close out the Western Conference semifinal series Sunday in Houston.

"Three wins feels good, but it's not over and it doesn't feel that good," said Payton. "It'll feel a lot better when we get number four."

In the night's other game, Shaquille O'Neal scored 28 points and 18 rebounds for the Orlando Magic, who took a 2-0 lead in their Eastern conference semifinal series with a 120-94 rout of the Atlanta Hawks.

Shawn Kemp added 21 points and 18 rebounds for Seattle, which has won 12 consecutive games against Houston.

Seattle, which failed to advance out of the first round of the playoffs the past two seasons, is one victory away from advancing to the conference finals for the first time since 1993, when the Sonics lost to Phoenix in seven games.

Clyde Drexler scored 28 points and Kenny Smith added 22 of his 27 in the first half for Houston, which has won its last eight playoff games when facing elimination.

The Rockets, the only team to rally from a 3-1 deficit in playoff history, will now try to become the first team to rally from a 3-0 hole.

"We're just going to have to go out and do it," said Drexler. "No one else has done it before."

The SuperSonics fell behind 11-2 at the start of the game and 26-10 with 4:31 remaining but closed the deficit to 66-62 at halftime.

"We knew the storm was coming early, we called time-out, told ourselves to calm down," said Kemp. "We knew down two games, they'd come out shooting for the stars."

Houston took its final lead of the game on a layup by

Robert Horry that made it 95-93 with 9:32 to play. The Sonics then went on an 8-2 burst.

"Yeah, I thought we had them and even in the fourth quarter when we were up by one," said Smith, who was 8-for-15 from the field and dished out 11 assists.

"They just made the big offensive plays," he said.

After Houston cut the deficit to 104-103 with 2:44 left, Kemp and Sam Perkins hit two free throws each around a hook shot by Schrempf, pushing Seattle's lead to 110-103 with 1:23 remaining. Houston countered with a 9-3 burst, capped by a 26-footer by Elle to pull the Rockets within 113-112 with 13.9 seconds to play.

Payton hit two free throws to make it 115-112 with 10.2 seconds to go. Elle launched a desperation three-pointer from nearly the same spot of the long bomb he made earlier, but it bounced off the rim.

Payton had eight assists for Seattle and Perkins added 17 points off the bench for the Sonics. Kemp's 18 rebounds were two shy of his playoff career high.

"This is a special team," said Payton. "We stay poised, we stick together. Right now, we're just playing ball. We found an answer to everything they've thrown at us and we've executed on those answers."

Hakeem Olajuwon was one assist shy of a triple-double, finishing with 24 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists.

"I thought it wasn't a very good basketball game but there was some great individual performances," said Houston coach Rudy Tomjanovich. "I thought we played hard but we're playing against a very good basket-

ball team. In Orlando, O'Neal, who set a franchise record in Game 1 with 41 points, continued to pound the smaller frontline of the Hawks, scoring 25 in the first half for the second straight game.

"We just played good team basketball," O'Neal said. "I still think we can play better."

To Jimi Scott, whose five points made him the only starter to fail to reach double figures in the series opener, scored eight of his 17 points in a 21-7 run that gave the Magic a 36-19 lead after one quarter.

"Everybody's just stepping up and making big contributions right now and that's what you want this time of year," said Orlando coach Brian Hill.

Orlando guard Penny Hardaway finished with 15 points and seven assists, leaving the game early because of a strained hamstring.

"His right hamstring just tightened up," said Orlando trainer Lenny Currier.

"He really started to favour it in the third period, so when the period ended, he really didn't need to go any further, so we brought him out of the ball game at that point."

Mookie Blaylock scored 26 points and Christian Laettner added 20 points for Atlanta. "We've just got to go out and play the game," said Blaylock. "They played two great games. It's hard to go in there and stop Shaq. You go double, and they hit the three."

"They're not as great on the road as they are at home. We beat them at home before, so we know what to do."

Game 3 is Sunday at Atlanta.

NBA PLAYOFFS

PLAYOFF RESULTS			
Eastern Conference semifinals			
Orlando	120	Atlanta	94
(Orlando leads best-of-seven series 2-0)			
Western Conference semifinals			
Seattle	115	Houston	112
(Seattle leads best-of-seven series 3-0)			

Wilander reaches clay court semis

PINEHURST, North Carolina (R) — Sweden's Mats Wilander has made a career of frustrating opponents, and he made American Vince Spadea his latest victim Friday, 1-6, 6-3, 6-2 at the \$264,250 U.S. clay court championships.

The victory advanced the 85th-ranked Wilander, a former world number one in 1988, to his first semifinals since he reached the final four at Montreal and New Haven last summer.

"Ninety-five percent of my wins in matches are because of my frustrating players," Wilander said. "That's my way of winning matches."

"Physically and technically are absolutely not how I win matches. That's the way the top three, top five win matches. For me, it all happens in my head."

Another player who seems to win mental battles is 76th-ranked Fernando Meligeni of Brazil, playing in his second consecutive Pinehurst quarter-final.

Meligeni faced a match point in the second-set tiebreaker against 86th-ranked Patrick Rafter of Australia, but emerged victorious with a 3-6, 7-6 (9-7), 6-3 win.

In Meligeni's previous match — a three-setter against another Australian, second-seeded Todd Woodbridge — he had faced five match points, for a total of six so far.

"It was another war and I'm the cat man," Meligeni said. "I have nine lives. I guess I have three lives more."

Wilander plays fifth-seeded Javier Frana of Argentina in one semifinal, while Meligeni plays sixth-seeded Jason Stoltenberg in the other.

The 50th-ranked Frana struggled before taking a 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (7-4) quarter-final win over the 69th-ranked Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden. The 61st-ranked Stoltenberg defeated fourth-seeded Richey Reneberg 6-4, 7-5 in the quarter-finals.

Wilander has beaten the 78th-ranked Spadea all three times they have played. The first time was in the 1994 quarter-finals here.

"When Vince is at his best level he plays like top 10, top 20 calibre," Wilander said after the two-hour, five-minute match. "But when he's not at his best, he's not that good."

Spadea, 21, owned the first set, making Wilander look every one of his 31 years old. But Wilander is tough to break down and discourage.



Swiss 15-year-old tennis star Martina Hingis gets a hug from her mother after she beat world number one Steffi Graf of Germany during their Italian Cup match May 10 (Reuters photo)

Graf, Sanchez disappear

ROME (R) — The world's top two women players, Steffi Graf and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, were given an unwelcome glimpse of the future at the Italian Open on Friday when both suffered shock quarter-final losses to up-and-coming youngsters.

Top seed Graf was handed her first clay defeat in almost two years by 15-year-old Swiss Martina Hingis while Sanchez, seeded third and a winner in Hamburg last week, went down to Romanian Irina Spirlea, age 22, in straight sets.

The fall of Graf and Sanchez, who between them have won the last three French Opens, opens the door to a new, rising generation of clay court stars at a tournament long considered the main warm-up for Roland Garros.

Hingis, who in January became the youngest ever quarter-finalist at the Australian Open, is already regarded as a future champion in the making.

Spirlea, a semifinalist here last year, has now beaten Sanchez, one of the world's most accomplished slow court players, twice on clay this year.

The two winners now meet in the semifinal while defending champion Conchita Martinez, taken to three sets by Bulgaria's Magdalena Maleeva, must face either teenage Croat Iva Majoli, seeded four, or Nathalie

Tauziat of France. Hingis could scarcely believe her first-ever victory over Graf in which she showed maturity beyond her years to fight back from the loss of the first set to win 2-6 6-2 6-3.

"I've just beaten the world number one," said an ecstatic Hingis, already ranked 20th in the world. "It feels great."

For Graf, previously unbeaten in tournament play this year, it was the first defeat on clay since losing to Mary Pierce in the French Open semifinals two years ago and a severe blow to her preparations for Paris.

"I've lost a little confidence here with this defeat," said Graf afterwards, adding she would not be asking for a wildcard entry to next week's Berlin Open but taking a rest.

Sanchez's bid to win one of the few clay court tournaments she has never won will have to wait another year following her 6-4 6-3 defeat to Spirlea.

The result was only in doubt in the final game when the Romanian, ranked 18th in the world, let her nerves get the better of her, squandering three match-points including an overhead smash with the court at her mercy.

Martinez's victory over Maleeva stretched her remarkable unbeaten run at the Foro Italico to 18 matches.

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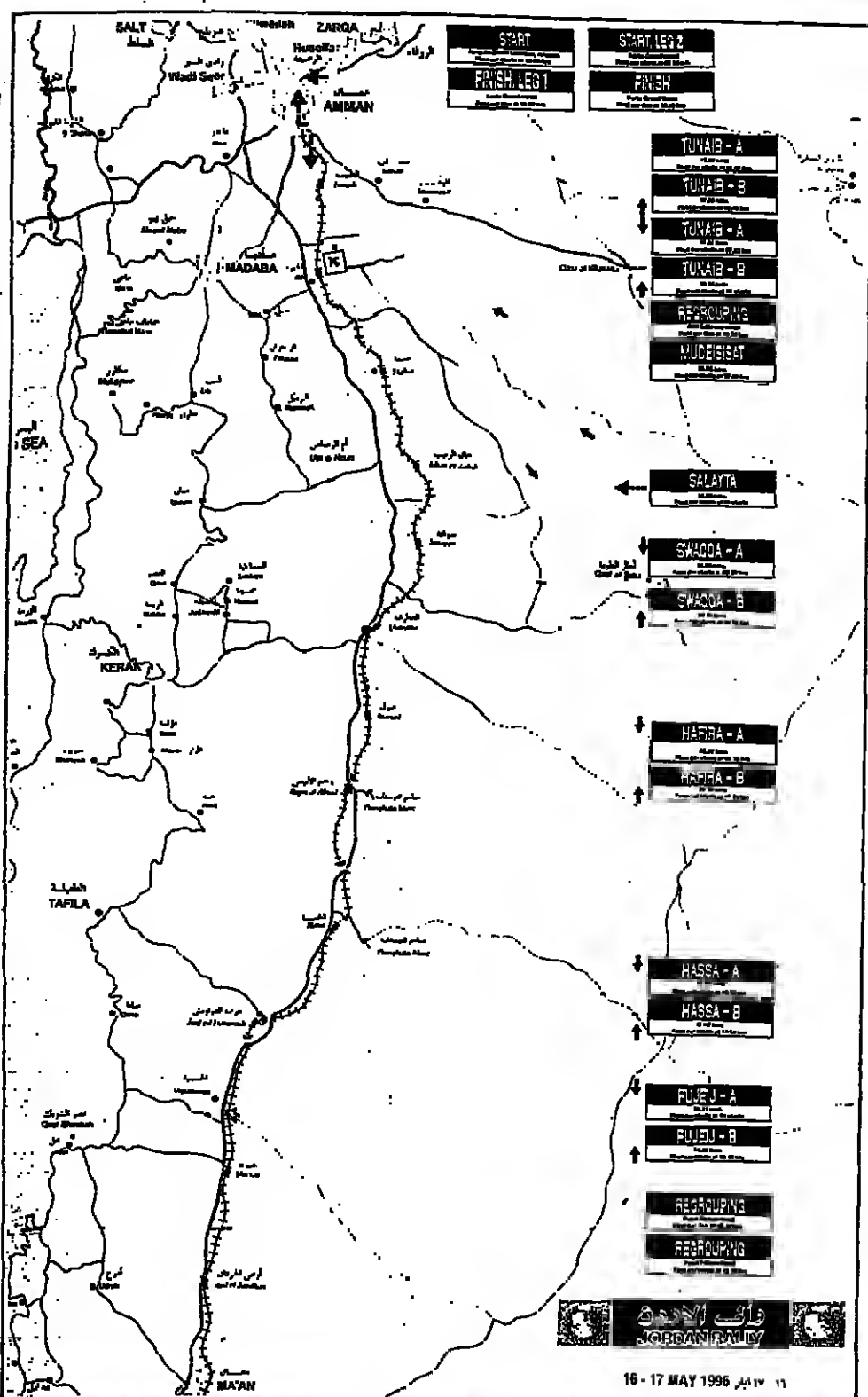
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Map illustrating the special stages and the overall route of the 1996 Jordan International Rally.

RACJ ready for Jordan International Rally

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

Amman — As organisers begin the countdown for the 1996 Jordan International Rally, some foreign competitors have already arrived and together with the largest gathering of Jordanian participants have begun practising the gruelling desert route.

At a press conference Saturday at rally headquarters the Forte Grand Hotel, chairman of the motor sports committee at the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ) Hassan Ala'eddin outlined preparations for the event — the second round of the Middle East Rally Championship.

For the first time in years and for the third time in its 14-year history the Jordan Rally is without a major sponsor.

"This is a tough year for the Jordan Rally, but hopefully, through the efforts of everyone concerned, it will be a success," Mr. Ala'eddin told reporters. However he added that the Forte Grand had remained the rally headquarters for the third consecutive year and had provided some Jordanian drivers with accommodation.

Mr. Ala'eddin noted that while two Jordanian participants — Amjad Farrah and George Sham'oun — had to pull out since their cars hadn't arrived, that still left 16 Jordanian participants in the 35-strong entry list.

"That is a very good number for local competitors who have Group A and N rally classified cars."

He added that HRH Prince Abdullah's participation in the rally had not yet been confirmed.

The entry list is headed by Middle East champions Abdullah Bakhashab and Mohammad Bin Sulayem. Both are expected to lead the competition with Bakhashab returning to retain his title while Bin Sulayem will be looking for his sixth Jordan Rally title.

Jordanian competitors include Marouf Abu Samra who finished third overall last year. Bashar Bustami who came in fourth, 1995 Jordan Open champion Mohammad Al Daoud and others.

Top competitors are also arriving from Cyprus and Qatar and other countries represented include the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Bahrain, France, Kuwait, Great Britain, and Germany.

Like last year, the route will cover all desert tracks that will take competitors from Amman heading south and reaching as far as the rose-red city of Petra on the second day of the event.

Participants will drive 860 kilometres including 325

kilometres of 14 special stages.

Last year, 15 out of 26 starters finished the rally including six of the 14 participating Jordanians. The eventual champion, Bakhashab, set a Jordan rally record of winning every single stage of the two-day event.

While most competitors note that the Jordan Rally was unique among Middle East rallies for including asphalt stages through scenic village roads on the first day, participants will be missing that aspect for the second year running after RACJ officials cancelled the asphalt stages following considerable problems in '94 and '93 rallies when fans disrupted some stages by throwing rocks at marshals and cars.

This year's rally will again avoid the crowded area around the Roman Amphitheatre and start from King Abdullah Gardens in Shmeisani at noon Thursday.

Competitors will have four special stages and drive 241 kilometres on the first day.

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East-West vulnerable, North	30	Pass	20T	DM
North				
643				
QJ1075				
K107				
West				
754				
Q98				
QAS				
4A5				
East				
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10752				
9842				
984				
South				
4Q1032				
QKJ				
86				
Q982				
The bidding:				
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST				

Aqueduct as at the bridge table. On this deal from the 1997 Summer Nationals in New Orleans, Mitchell decided to convert partner's diamond preempt to three no trump. West regarded that as a personal insult, and expressed it in no uncertain terms.

South won the opening lead of a heart in hand with the jack, and was not too hopeful of the prospects. Nine tricks could not be made without first forcing out the minor-suit aces, so at trick two declarer led a diamond. West held up for one round and, on winning the continuation, could have set the contract at least one trick by cashing the ace of hearts.

But West did not know the king of hearts was now here, and instead tried to get to partner's hand with a spade. East played the jack and Mitchell won with the ace. A club was led and a confident West stepped up with the ace and led another spade. There was a great deal of mortification when East produced the ace and declarer the ten, and the contract rolled home with two overtricks.

United win F.A. Cup

LONDON (R) — Manchester United created English soccer history on Saturday when they beat Liverpool 1-0 in the F.A. Cup final to become the first team to win the double twice.

The only goal of a largely disappointing match was scored by Frenchman Eric Cantona with five minutes to play when the United skipper volleyed home from the edge of the penalty box.

Cantona, England's Footballer of the Year, also made history by becoming the first foreign player to captain an English cup-winning side.

United, who won the Premier League championship last week, have now won the F.A. Cup a record nine times after clinching the double for the second time in three years.

In the previous 106 years in English soccer the double had only been won five times.

Dortmund retain title

BONN (R) — Borussia Dortmund successfully defended their German first division title on Saturday when they drew 2-2 at 1860 Munich to take an unassailable four-point lead over nearest rivals Bayern Munich who lost at Schalke.

Bayern's hopes of pushing the battle for the Bundesliga to next Saturday's final day of action ended when the Bavarians were beaten 2-1 after an injury-time winner from Schalke midfielder Andreas Mueller.

Dortmund secured their fifth title after successes in 1956, 1957, 1963 and 1995. It was only the second time the Roar club had won the championship since the present Bundesliga league structure was put in place in 1963.

German international defender Stefan Renter gave Dortmund the lead after 38 minutes. Veteran Michael Zorc seemed to have clinched three vital points with the visitors' second in the 65th minute.

Night of heavyweights ends in controversy

NEW YORK (AP) — Lennox Lewis wants Mike Tyson, Tim Witherspoon wants Riddick Bowe and Bobby Czyz might want an investigation.

Evander Holyfield, the former undisputed heavyweight champion, stopped Czyz after five rounds on a tripleheader night of heavyweights Friday night at Madison Square Garden.

In the other two scheduled 10-rounders, former WBC champion Lennox Lewis scored a roundly hooded majority decision over Ray Mercer, and Tim Witherspoon, a former WBC and WBA champion, stopped Jorge Luis Gonzalez in the fifth round.

"This was a positive step towards a Tyson fight," Lewis said. "I'm not taking any easy fights. This was a preparation for a Mike Tyson fight. ... I don't think he is going to duck me."

Witherspoon, meanwhile, said he thinks he deserves a shot at Bowe.

"I think he's the best heavyweight out there today," said the 38-year-old Witherspoon, who earned his first world title in 1984. "Better than Mike Tyson."

Holyfield won his fight when Czyz was unable to answer the bell for the sixth round, complaining of blurred vision.

Ringside physician Dr. Rufus Sadler asked Czyz: "Can you go on?"

Czyz, a former middleweight champion, answered: "Not realistically."

Czyz complained that his vision began to blur after the second round because there was a foreign substance on Holyfield's gloves, but referee Robert Lipton said he checked the gloves and found



Former heavyweight champ Evander Holyfield (right) hits Bobby Czyz in their fight at the "Big" Heavyweight Boxing event May 10 at New York's Madison Square Garden. Holyfield won in fifth round by technical knock out (Reuters photo)

them clean. After the fight, the gloves were impounded by the New York state athletic commission.

"Somebody put something on his gloves, and it's unfortunate because I'm going to have to go to the hospital in a little while," said Czyz, whose eyes still were burning at a post-fight news conference. Czyz said he was not accusing Holyfield.

Holyfield totally dominated Czyz, who seemed much the smaller man despite giving away only 1 pound (½ kilo) to Holyfield, who weighed 211 (96). Holyfield hitged Czyz in every round, forcing him to take a standing 8-count in the third round.

In the fifth and final round, Holyfield pinned Czyz on the

ropes, and Czyz couldn't move him. Holyfield hurt Czyz late in the round with a right hand high on the head.

"This is the first time in a long time that I've fought somebody my size," Holyfield said. "I kind of rushed myself. ... It was easy to hit him, and all of a sudden I found myself trying to take that one big shot."

Holyfield now is 32-3 with 23 knockouts, while Czyz has a career record of 44-7 with 28 knockouts.

Lewis won a close, unpopular decision over Mercer, who might have fought the fight of his life, chasing Lewis for almost the entire 10 rounds and scoring often with a hard left jab, a punch he had seldom used in the past.

Lewis, a former WBC

champion who fights out of England, found Mercer a stubborn, unmoving target and while he paid dearly every time he hit Mercer, Lewis hit him often — with rights and lefts and upper cuts. The right was his best punch, yet Mercer was never close to going down.

"I did the best I could," Mercer said. "Lewis took the best shots I had to give. I didn't think I lost the fight."

When the fight was over, Mercer had blood coming out of his mouth and nose and his left eye was almost closed. Lewis had swelling under his left eye and was obviously a spent fighter.

Judge Melvina Latham scored the fight even, 95-95, while the other two saw it narrowly for Lewis.

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Yemeni police hunt kidnappers of son of governor

SANAA (Agencies) — Yemeni police on Saturday arrested dozens of members of a tribe which kidnapped the son of the governor of Aden, Taha Ahmad Ghanem, as they pressed for his release, security sources said.

Meanwhile, deputies and tribal leaders were attempting to make contact with the kidnappers of Maad Taha Ahmad Ghanem, aged about 20, in the Dana region, some 80 kilometres southeast of Sanaa.

Police said the son of the governor, a member of the ruling General People's Congress, was kidnapped in Sanaa on Thursday by members of the powerful Khawlan clan who are also relatives of a leading opposition politician.

He was picked up on the orders of Ahmad Obad Sherif, a member of the central committee of the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP), who is currently living in Saudi Arabia, police said.

Dozens of tribesmen were rounded up in various parts of the country, especially Sanaa and the eastern region of Maarib, to put pressure on the kidnappers.

Police also arrested one of Mr. Sherif's sons, and senior figures within the Khawlan and Maareh clans have started negotiations to try to obtain Maad's release.

The kidnap plan was hatched after a court in the southern port city of Aden ruled Mr. Sherif should return a property in the region to its former owner. Tribesmen kidnapped Maad and took him to Dana.

According to tribal leaders, the kidnappers are demanding that the property case be reviewed.

Northern forces defeated the YSP in a civil war in July 1994.

The Yemeni tribes often use kidnapping as a tool to apply pressure on the government — around 50 foreigners have been kidnapped in string of incidents since 1992. All were released safe and sound.

After North and South Yemen merged in 1990, a nationalisation law in the former south was cancelled and government houses were ordered returned to their original owners. That decision has triggered several disputes in Aden.

Carbomb kills 1, injures several in Algiers suburb

PARIS (Agencies) — A car-bomb exploded in the Algerian garrison town of Blida on Saturday, killing one person and wounding five seriously, Algerian officials said.

A statement from the security forces, carried by Algeria's official news agency APS, said the bomb went off in the early hours in the Bab Al Rahha district of Blida, 50 kilometres south of Algiers.

Blida has a big military garrison and is also a stronghold of Muslim fundamentalists.

Algeria has been shaken by violence since the authorities in January 1992 cancelled a general election which Islamic fundamentalists were poised to win. An estimated 45,000 people have since died.

No group claimed responsibility for the Blida bombing but the Algerian authorities have blamed militants for a string of bomb attacks since May 1992.

Algerian troops last week stormed a militants' hideout in the wealthy Said Hamidine district in Algiers, killing 16 guerrillas blamed for slaying senior former government officials, senior army officers, prominent intellectuals and for carrying out car bomb attacks in Algiers.

Gunmen shot dead an anti-Islamist party activist in the eastern Algerian town of Constantine, an Algerian newspaper said on Saturday.

Abdul Salam Chelghoum, a member of the hardline left-wing anti-Islamist Ettahadi party, was killed overnight on Wednesday in Constantine, 300 kilometres east of Algiers, the newspaper Liberte said.

Ettahadi advocates the out-

Violence flares at Sarajevo border

SARAJEVO (R) — French NATO troops used tanks and armoured personnel carriers to cordon off a Sarajevo apartment block on Saturday after violence flared overnight between Muslims and Serbs, witnesses said.

Trouble erupted along a tense communal confrontation line in Dobrinja, a neighbourhood in the west of the city built to house athletes during the 1984 Winter Olympics.

One Muslim man was shot in the chest during the disturbance on Friday and a Serb was rescued by the French after being slightly wounded when three hand grenades were thrown at the car he was driving, NATO and U.N. police sources said.

The French deployed at least two light tanks, eight armoured personnel carriers and 50 soldiers on Saturday morning to seal off an area around an apartment block on the Muslim side of the confrontation line.

"It is only for a check of the building," French Colonel Bertrand Madoux told Reuters on the scene.

"Last night we had four grenades and some (small arms) shooting... we are waiting for the Bosnian police and the (U.N.) police. We are here to make sure nobody escapes."

Guns from the French tanks and armoured personnel carriers were trained on the building and soldiers blocked all entrances while they waited for local police to search for weapons.

The exact location of the "inter-ethnic boundary line" between Muslim-Croat and



Bosnian children watch French soldiers deploy in the Sarajevo suburb of Dobrinja on Saturday (Reuters photo)

Serb territory in Dobrinja is disputed and months of negotiations have failed to produce a compromise.

The boundary line actually bisects apartment blocks and even some individual flats.

Residents on both sides of the line worry a final decision on its location may force some of them to leave their flats or live under the rule of a rival ethnic group.

U.N. police who patrol the

area have reported an increase in tensions as the boundary line dispute drags on.

Shots have been fired and hand grenades thrown across the line in both directions on several occasions.

Speaking from his hospital bed, Eldar Spahic, 23, told Reuters he was walking his dog on Friday evening when shooting broke out and he was struck by a bullet.

"It was about eight o'clock last night and when I heard shooting, I started to run but I was hit in the left side of my chest," he said.

The disputed area was once a fiercely contested front line but the soldiers who fought there have returned to barracks and the skirmishes are reported to be between civilians, sometimes involving rival Muslim-Croat and Serb police.

Sixty-six year old Mehmed Huseinovic looked bewildered on Saturday.

"Every week there's a serious incident in this area and I'm living here in real fear," he said.

"These soldiers (NATO) seem to think we're going to find nothing in this building. Why aren't they deploying on the other (Serb) sides?"

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ciller faces new charges

ANKARA (AP) — An Islamist party added to its attack of former Prime Minister Tansu Ciller with claims she pocketed government money, reports said Saturday. The latest accusation by the Welfare Party will likely not lead to a formal investigation since it involves a discretionary account, which has no reporting requirements. But it shows the relentless opposition by Welfare, whose accusations have led parliament to open two corruption probes of Mrs. Ciller. Welfare led December election but was blocked from power by a coalition pact between Mrs. Ciller and Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz. Welfare's main goal is the coalition's disintegration in hopes of getting a shot at being part of a government partnership. Welfare now claims Mrs. Ciller kept some of the \$7 million withdrawn from a discretionary fund just before she left office in March, newspapers reported. Mrs. Ciller, who earlier had denied taking the funds, acknowledged it Saturday. But she said the money was used properly. Prime ministers are given a free hand in how they use the discretionary fund and the spending cannot be investigated.

Mogadishu's court orders two executions

MOGADISHU (AFP) — The Islamic court in north Mogadishu this week sentenced two young men accused of killing their relatives to death by firing squad, court officials said Saturday, adding that the executions had already been carried out. The convicts were found guilty of murdering their relatives following disputes over business and money. "Security in north Mogadishu remains under the firm control of the Islamic courts and no incidents of banditry will be tolerated," the chairman of the courts, Ali Sheikh Muhammad, told reporters. Sheikh Muhammad has called for the use of the sword for executions but other judges prefer convicts to be shot because it is less painful. The courts have brought a semblance of law and order in north Mogadishu, but south Mogadishu warlord Mohammed Farah Aideed is opposed to them. He fears their success would be a direct challenge to his self-styled "government" in his south Mogadishu fiefdom.

'Orbit will not pay BBC for scrapped deal'

DUBAI (R) — A London-based Arabic-language newspaper said on Saturday the Saudi-owned Orbit Communications would not compensate BBC Television's worldwide service for cancelling a deal to transmit its Arabic service television. Al Sharq Al Awsat quoted Orbit sources as saying the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Rome-based satellite relay station signed an agreement in Rome on Friday ending their contract. "The two sides agreed not to reveal details of the agreement ending the contract," the paper said. "But Al Sharq Al Awsat learned... that Orbit will not pay any compensation to the BBC." Orbit Communications, which is owned by a group chaired by a cousin of Saudi King Fahd, cancelled its contract in April in protest at the BBC's Panorama programme which alleged human rights abuses in Saudi Arabia. Newspapers in the Gulf had said the 10-year contract, signed in 1994 to transmit the BBC Arabic service television to the Middle East, was worth \$100 million.

Ex-soldier on trial in Egypt for 'spying' for Israel

CAIRO (Agencies) — A former sailor accused of spying for Israel pleaded innocent Saturday, saying he only took money from Israeli agents to give him time to contact Egyptian authorities.

Abdul Malik Ali Hamad, 48, faces a life sentence on charges that he received \$2,000 from Israel in exchange for information on other Egyptian sailors. Mr. Hamad's 11-year service ended in 1987, but some of his colleagues are still in the navy, officials said.

Police also said he tried to get information on Egyptian military installations, including a naval base at Alexandria and two air bases in the Nile Delta. He was spotted near all three, officials said.

Police arrested Mr. Hamad on March 25, nearly three months after he was said to have returned from training in the Red Sea port of Eilat in Israel. Mr. Hamad acknowledged receiving money but said he did so only to give himself time to contact Egyptian authorities.

He said he did not provide Israel any information.

His trial was postponed to May 11.

Although Egypt was the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, relations remain cold, and Saturday's case was the second espionage trial involving Israel in two months.

On April 14, an Egyptian court sentenced Amer Salama to life at hard labour for spying for Israel for 12 years.

The charge sheet against Mr. Hamad said that between 1993 and 1996 he provided Israeli intelligence with information on the Egyptian navy, including the system of voluntary recruitment and the names of some commanders.

He told Israel where certain military units were based and what missions they were assigned, it added.

He agreed to gather information on the naval and merchant marine ports in Alexandria, Mansoura military airfield and Bagdadi air defence base in the Nile Delta, it said.

His Israeli contact, an intelligence officer in Eilat, gave him \$2,000 in cash and a Japanese wristwatch, it

3 convicts executed in Swaga prison

AMMAN (J.T.) — Three men — two Jordanians and one an Iraqi — convicted of rape and murder were hanged at dawn Saturday in the Swaga prison, security officials said.

Jordanians Sahri Abu Foudeh, 63, and Othman Abu Lawi, 45, were the first convicts to be executed for rape after the penal code was amended in 1988 to prescribe capital punishment for such an offence, according to a statement issued by Ghazi Azar, attorney general at Amman criminal court.

Before the amendment, the penalty for rape was a seven-year prison term, with the death sentence handed down only to those who murder their victims.

Abu Foudeh had been found guilty of raping a 10-year-old Egyptian girl in his grocery on April 29, 1995. He had sexually abused the child for four months, court documents said.

Evidence produced in court showed Abu Lawi twice raped his 13-year-old niece in May 1995 when her parents left her in her uncle's care during a trip to the West Bank.

Iraqi Hamid Abdul Rasoul had been found guilty of raping and murdering Salimeh Hassoun, also an Iraqi, in Sahab town, east of Amman last year.

The executions brought to five the number of people hanged in Jordan since the start of 1996.

COLUMN

Mahathir hosts dinner for 12,000

KUALA LUMPUR (R) — Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad is hosting Saturday a sit-down dinner for 12,000 people, billed as one of the biggest in history, in celebration of the 50th anniversary of his political party. The dinner was being held at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur, where workers set up 1,200 tables in nine meeting halls and other areas of the building, the national news agency Bernama said. Two hundred cooks were preparing an elaborate menu including traditional favourites like beef in spicy coconut sauce, chicken curry, various kinds of seafood and vegetables with coconut flavoured rice. Some 3,000 chickens and 2,000 kg (4,200 lb) each of meat, fish and vegetables will be served to celebrate the United Malays National Organisation anniversary. According to the Guinness Book of Records, the largest sit-down dinner, for 18,000 diners, was held in Paris on August 18, 1889.

2-year-old survives ride on car bumper

STEEPLE BUMPSTEAD, England (AFP) — A two-year-old boy clung to the back of his mother's car for more than five kilometres while she drove at speeds of up to 80 kilometres per hour unaware he was on board. Without his mother's knowledge, Blake "Whitney" had clambered on to the back of the four-wheel-drive vehicle before his mother Penny set off from her home in this southeastern English town. She only realised what was happening when another car flagged her down. She later said Blake was so small that she had not spotted him in her rear-view mirror as she drove off. She said when she lifted him from the back of the vehicle he was absolutely "rigid" and quickly fell asleep when placed in the back seat.

Supermodel sues French party over ads

PARIS (R) — Supermodel Linda Evangelista is suing France's far-right National Front party for one million francs (\$200,000) for using a picture of her as its heroine Joan Of Arc, her lawyer said. Jean-Paul Ravele said Jean-Marie Le Pen's anti-immigrant front had used the picture of Evangelista without permission on mini-posters to advertise the party's May Day rally in Paris in defiance of a court ruling last month.

"You can't attach a political label to people nor use their image without permission," he said. "This one devalues the image of Linda Evangelista." The doctored picture shows Evangelista dressed as Joan Of Arc. The 15th-century saint, who led the French against English armies, is used by the front as its symbol. Evangelista's demand for damages would be heard within three weeks by a court in Versailles, west of Paris. Mr. Ravele said. Last month, a court in Nanterre, west of Paris, ordered the Front to pay Evangelista 80,000 francs (\$16,000), her Elite Modelling Agency 40,000 francs (\$8,000), and designer Karl Lagerfeld, who took the photograph, 80,000 francs (\$16,000) for using the picture. Despite the ruling, the picture of Evangelista as Joan Of Arc showed up again in the daily Minute and National-Hebdo, both close to the Front.